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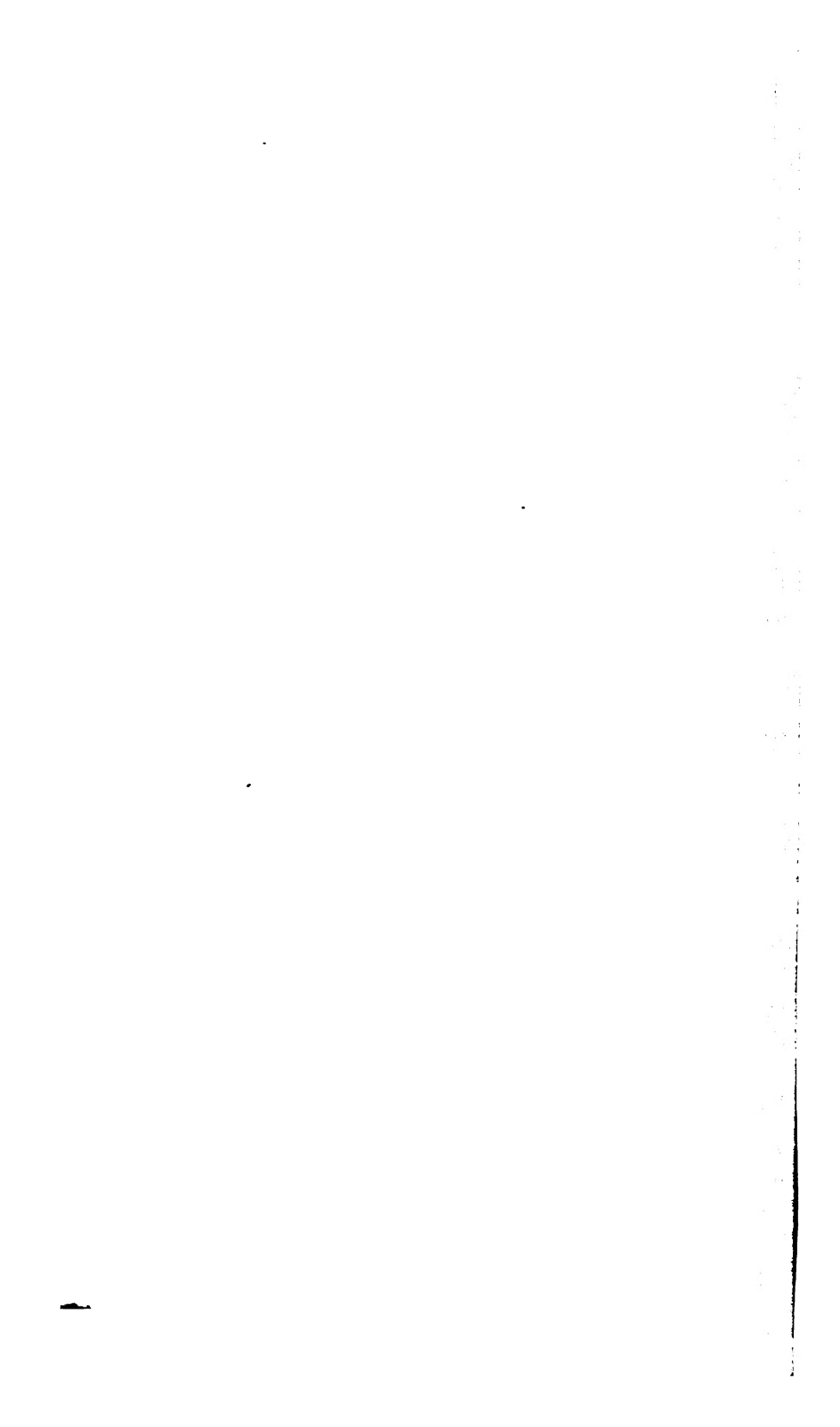
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D. D. D.





Chas. F. Townsend
L E C T U R E S

ON
R H E T O R I C
AND
B E L L E S L E T T R E S.

BY HUGH BLAIR, D. D. & F. R. S. ED.
ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE HIGH CHURCH, AND
PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND BELLES LETTRES
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.


IN TWO VOLUMES.


VOL. I.

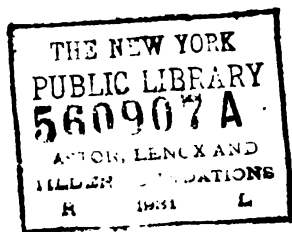

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John T. Townsend

P R E F A C E.



THE following lectures were read in the university of Edinburgh, for twenty-four years. The publication of them, at present, was not altogether a matter of choice. Imperfect copies of them in manuscript, from notes taken by students who heard them read, were first privately handed about ; and afterwards frequently exposed to public sale. When the author saw them circulate so currently, as even to be quoted in print*, and found himself often threatened with surreptitious publications of them, he judged it to be high time that they should proceed from his own hand, rather than come into public view under some very defective and erroneous form.

They were originally designed for the initiation of youth into the study of belles lettres, and of composition. With the same intention they are now published ; and, therefore, the form of lectures, in which they were first composed, is still retained. The author gives them to the world,

* Biographia Britannica. Article, ADDISON.

neither as a work wholly original, nor as a compilation from the writings of others. On every subject contained in them, he has thought for himself. He consulted his own ideas and reflexions : and a great part of what will be found in these lectures is entirely his own. At the same time, he availed himself of the ideas and reflexions of others, as far as he thought them proper to be adopted. To proceed in this manner was his duty as a public professor. It was incumbent on him, to convey to his pupils all the knowledge that could improve them ; to deliver not merely what was new, but what might be useful, from whatever quarter it came. He hopes, that to such as are studying to cultivate their taste, to form their style, or to prepare themselves for public speaking or composition, his lectures will afford a more comprehensive view of what relates to these subjects, than, as far as he knows, is to be received from any one book in our language.

In order to render his work of greater service, he has generally referred to the books which he consulted, as far as he remembers them ; that the readers might be directed to any farther illustration which they afford. But, as such a length of time has elapsed since the first composition of his lectures, he may, perhaps, have adopted the sentiments of some author into whose writings he had then looked, without now remembering whence he derived them.

In the opinions which he has delivered concerning such a variety of authors, and of literary matters, as come under his consideration, he cannot expect that all his readers will concur with him. The subjects are of such a nature, as allow room for much diversity of taste and sentiment : and the author will respectfully submit to the judgment of the public.

P R E F A C E.

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Retaining the simplicity of the lecturing style, as best fitted for conveying instruction, he has aimed, in his language, at no more than perspicuity. If, after the liberties which it was necessary for him to take, in criticising the style of the most eminent writers in our language, his own style shall be thought open to reprehension, all that he can say, is, that his book will add one to the many proofs already afforded to the world, of its being much easier to give instruction, than to set example.

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LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTION.

ONE of the most distinguished privileges which providence has conferred upon mankind, is the power of communicating their thoughts to one another. Destitute of this power, reason would be a solitary, and, in some measure, an unavailing principle. Speech is the great instrument by which man becomes beneficial to man :/and it is to the intercourse and transmission of thought, by means of speech, that we are chiefly indebted for the improvement of thought itself. Small are the advances which a single, unassisted individual can make towards perfecting any of his powers. What we call human reason, is not the effort or ability of one, so much as it is the result of the reason of many, arising from lights mutually communicated, in consequence of discourse and writing.

It is obvious, then, that writing and discourse are objects entitled to the highest attention. Whether the influence of the speaker, or the entertainment of the hearer, be consulted—whether utility or pleasure be the principal aim in view—we are prompted, by the strongest motives, to study how we may communicate our thoughts to one another with most advantage. Accordingly we find, that in almost every nation, as soon as language had extended itself beyond that scanty communication

which was requisite for the supply of men's necessities, the improvement of discourse began to attract regard. In the language even of rude, uncultivated tribes, we can trace some attention to the grace and force of those expressions which they used, when they sought to persuade or to affect. They were early sensible of a beauty in discourse, and endeavoured to give it certain decorations, which experience had taught them it was capable of receiving, long before the study of those decorations was formed into a regular art.

But, among nations in a civilized state, no art has been cultivated with more care, than that of language, style, and composition. The attention paid to it may, indeed, be assumed as one mark of the progress of society towards its most improved period. For, according as society improves and flourishes, men acquire more influence over one another by means of reasoning and discourse; and in proportion as that influence is felt to enlarge, it must follow, as a natural consequence, that they will bestow more care upon the methods of expressing their conceptions with propriety and eloquence. Hence we find, that, in all the polished nations of Europe, this study has been treated as highly important, and has possessed a considerable place in every plan of liberal education.

Indeed, when the arts of speech and writing are mentioned, I am sensible that prejudices against them are apt to rise in the minds of many. A sort of art is immediately thought of, that is ostentatious and deceitful; the minute and trifling study of words alone; the pomp of expression; the studied fallacies of rhetoric; ornament substituted in the room of use. We need not wonder, that, under such imputations, all study of discourse as an art, should have suffered in the opinion of men of understanding: and I am far from denying, that rhetoric and criticism

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have sometimes been so managed as to tend to the corruption, rather than to the improvement, of good taste and true eloquence. But sure it is equally possible to apply the principles of reason and good sense to this art, as to any other that is cultivated among men. If the following lectures have any merit, it will consist in an endeavour to substitute the application of these principles in the place of artificial and scholastic rhetoric; in an endeavour to explode false ornament, to direct attention more towards substance than show, to recommend good sense as the foundation of all good composition, and simplicity as essential to all true ornament.

When entering on the subject, I may be allowed, on this occasion, to suggest a few thoughts concerning the importance and advantages of such studies, and the rank they are entitled to possess in academical education*. I am under no temptation, for this purpose, of extolling their importance at the expense of any other department of science. On the contrary, the study of rhetoric and belles lettres supposes and requires a proper acquaintance with the rest of the liberal arts. It embraces them all within its circle, and recommends them to the highest regard. The first care of all such as wish either to write with reputation, or to speak in public so as to command attention, must be, to extend their knowledge; to lay in a rich store of ideas relating to those subjects of which the occasions of life may call them to discourse or to write. Hence, among the ancients, it was a fundamental principle, and fre-

* The author was the first who read lectures on this subject in the university of Edinburgh. He began with reading them in a private character in the year 1759. In the following year he was chosen professor of rhetoric by the magistrates and town council of Edinburgh; and, in 1762, his majesty was pleased to erect and endow a profession of rhetoric and belles lettres in that university; and the author was appointed the first regius professor:

quently inculcated, "*Quod omnibus disciplinis et artibus debet esse instructus orator*;" that the orator ought to be an accomplished scholar, and conversant in every part of learning. It is indeed impossible to contrive an art, and very pernicious it were, if it could be contrived, which should give the stamp of merit to any composition rich or splendid in expression, but barren or erroneous in thought. They are the wretched attempts towards an art of this kind which have so often disgraced oratory, and debased it below its true standard. The graces of composition have been employed to disguise or to supply the want of matter; and the temporary applause of the ignorant has been courted, instead of the lasting approbation of the discerning. But such imposture can never maintain its ground long. Knowledge and science must furnish the materials that form the body and substance of any valuable composition. Rhetoric serves to add the polish; and we know that none but firm and solid bodies can be polished well.

Of those who peruse the following lectures, some, in consequence either of their profession, or of their prevailing inclination, may have the view of being employed in composition, or in public speaking. Others, without any prospect of this kind, may wish only to improve their taste with respect to writing and discourse, and to acquire principles which will enable them to judge for themselves in that part of literature called the *belles lettres*.

With respect to the former, such as may have occasion to communicate their sentiments to the public, it is abundantly clear that some preparation of study is requisite for the end which they have in view. To speak or to write perspicuously and agreeably, with purity, with grace and strength, are attainments of the utmost consequence to all who purpose, either by speech or writing, to address the

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public. For without being master of those attainments, no man can do justice to his own conceptions; but how rich soever he may be in knowledge and in good sense, will be able to avail himself less of those treasures, than such as possess not half his store, but who can display what they possess with more propriety. Neither are these attainments of that kind for which we are indebted to nature merely. Nature has, indeed, conferred upon some a very favourable distinction in this respect, beyond others. But in these, as in most other talents she bestows, she has left much to be wrought out by every man's own industry. So conspicuous have been the effects of study and improvement in every part of eloquence; such remarkable examples have appeared of persons surmounting, by their diligence, the disadvantages of the most untoward nature, that among the learned it has long been a contested, and remains still an undecided point, whether nature or art confer most towards excelling in writing and discourse.

With respect to the manner in which art can most effectually furnish assistance for such a purpose, there may be diversity of opinions. I by no means pretend to say that mere rhetorical rules, how just soever, are sufficient to form an orator. Supposing natural genius to be favourable, more by a great deal will depend upon private application and study, than upon any system of instruction that is capable of being publicly communicated. But at the same time, though rules and instructions cannot do all that is requisite, they may, however, do much that is of real use. They cannot, it is true, inspire genius; but they can direct and assist it. They cannot remedy barrenness; but they may correct redundancy. They point out proper models for imitation. They bring into view the chief beauties that ought to be studied, and the

principal faults that ought to be avoided ; and thereby tend to enlighten taste, and to lead genius from unnatural deviations, into its proper channel. What would not avail for the production of great excellencies, may at least serve to prevent the commission of considerable errors.

All that regards the study of eloquence and composition, merits the higher attention upon this account, that it is intimately connected with the improvement of our intellectual powers. For I must be allowed to say, that when we are employed, after a proper manner, in the study of composition, we are cultivating reason itself. True rhetoric and sound logic are very nearly allied. The study of arranging and expressing our thoughts with propriety, teaches to think, as well as to speak, accurately. By putting our sentiments into words, we always conceive them more distinctly. Every one who has the slightest acquaintance with composition, knows, that when he expresses himself ill on any subject, when his arrangement is loose, and his sentences become feeble, the defects of his style can, almost on every occasion, be traced back to his indistinct conception of the subject : so close is the connexion between thoughts and the words in which they are clothed.

The study of composition, important in itself at all times, has acquired additional importance from the taste and manners of the present age. It is an age wherein improvements, in every part of science, have been prosecuted with ardour. To all the liberal arts much attention has been paid ; and to none more than to the beauty of language, and the grace and elegance of every kind of writing. The public ear is become refined. It will not easily bear what is slovenly and incorrect. Every author must aspire to some merit in expression, as

well as in sentiment, if he would not incur the danger of being neglected and despised.

I will not deny that the love of minute elegance, and attention to inferior ornaments of composition, may at present have engrossed too great a degree of the public regard. It is indeed my opinion, that we lean to this extreme ; often more careful of polished style, than of storing it with thought. Yet hence arises a new reason for the study of just and proper composition. If it be requisite not to be deficient in elegance or ornament in times when they are in such high estimation, it is still more requisite to attain the power of distinguishing false ornament from true, in order to prevent our being carried away by that torrent of false and frivolous taste, which never fails, when it is prevalent, to sweep along with it the raw and the ignorant. They who have never studied eloquence in its principles, nor have been trained to attend to the genuine and manly beauties of good writing, are always ready to be caught by the mere glare of language ; and when they come to speak in public, or to compose, have no other standard on which to form themselves, except what chances to be fashionable and popular, how corrupted soever, or erroneous, that may be.

But as there are many, who have no such objects as either composition or public speaking in view, let us next consider what advantages may be derived by them, from such studies as form the subject of these lectures. To them, rhetoric is not so much a practical art as a speculative science ; and the same instructions which assist others in composing, will assist them in discerning, and relishing, the beauties of composition. Whatever enables genius to execute well, will enable taste to criticise justly.

When we name criticising, prejudices may per-

haps arise, of the same kind with those which I mentioned before with respect to rhetoric. As rhetoric has been sometimes thought to signify nothing more than the scholastic study of words and phrases, and tropes, so criticism has been considered as merely the art of finding faults; as the frigid application of certain technical terms, by means of which persons are taught to cavil and censure in a learned manner. But this is the criticism of pedants only. True criticism is a liberal and humane art. It is the offspring of good sense and refined taste. It aims at acquiring a just discernment of the real merit of authors. It promotes a lively relish of their beauties, while it preserves us from that blind and implicit veneration which would confound their beauties and faults in our esteem. It teaches us, in a word, to admire and to blame with judgment, and not to follow the crowd blindly.

In an age when works of genius and literature are so frequently the subjects of discourse, when every one erects himself into a judge, and when we can hardly mingle in polite society without bearing some share in such discussions; studies of this kind, it is not to be doubted, will appear to derive part of their importance from the use to which they may be applied in furnishing materials for those fashionable topics of discourse, and thereby enabling us to support a proper rank in social life.

But I should be sorry if we could not rest the merit of such studies on somewhat of solid and intrinsical use, independent of appearance and show. The exercise of taste and of sound criticism, is in truth one of the most improving employments of the understanding. To apply the principles of good sense to composition and discourse; to examine what is beautiful, and why it is so; to employ ourselves in distinguishing accurately between the specious and the solid, between affected and natural ornament, must

certainly improve us not a little in the most valuable part of all philosophy, the philosophy of human nature. For such disquisitions are very intimately connected with the knowledge of ourselves. They necessarily lead us to reflect on the operations of the imagination, and the movements of the heart ; and increase our acquaintance with some of the most refined feelings which belong to our frame.

Logical and ethical disquisitions move in a higher sphere ; and are conversant with objects of a more severe kind ; the progress of the understanding in its search after knowledge, and the direction of the will in the proper pursuit of good. They point out to man the improvements of his nature as an intelligent being ; and his duties as the subject of moral obligation. Belles lettres and criticism chiefly consider him as a being endowed with those powers of taste and imagination, which were intended to embellish his mind, and to supply him with rational and useful entertainment. They open a field of investigation peculiar to themselves. All that relates to beauty, harmony, grandeur, and elegance ; all that can soothe the mind, gratify the fancy, or move the affections, belongs to their province. They present human nature under a different aspect from that which it assumes when viewed by other sciences. They bring to light various springs of action, which, without their aid, might have passed unobserved ; and which, though of a delicate nature, frequently exert a powerful influence on several departments of human life.

Such studies have also this peculiar advantage, that they exercise our reason without fatiguing it. They lead to enquiries acute, but not painful ; profound, but not dry nor abstruse. They strew flowers in the path of science ; and while they keep the mind bent, in some degree, and active, they relieve at the same time from that more toilsome labour

to which it must submit in the acquisition of necessary erudition, or the investigation of abstract truth.

The cultivation of taste is farther recommended by the happy effects which it naturally tends to produce on human life. The most busy man, in the most active sphere, cannot be always occupied by business. Men of serious professions cannot always be on the stretch of serious thought. Neither can the most gay and flourishing situations of fortune afford any man the power of filling all his hours with pleasure. Life must always languish in the hands of the idle. It will frequently languish even in the hands of the busy, if they have not some employment subsidiary to that which forms their main pursuit. How then shall these vacant spaces, those unemployed intervals, which, more or less, occur in the life of every one, be filled up? How can we contrive to dispose of them in any way that shall be more agreeable in itself, or more consonant to the dignity of the human mind, than in the entertainments of taste, and the study of polite literature? He who is so happy as to have acquired a relish for these, has always at hand an innocent and irreproachable amusement for his leisure hours, to save him from the danger of many a pernicious passion. He is not in hazard of being a burden to himself. He is not obliged to fly to low company, or to court the riot of loose pleasures, in order to cure the tediousness of existence.

Providence seems plainly to have pointed out this useful purpose to which the pleasures of taste may be applied, by interposing them in a middle station between the pleasures of sense, and those of pure intellect. We were not designed to grovel always among objects so low as the former; nor are we capable of dwelling constantly in so high a region as the latter. The pleasures of taste refresh the mind after the toils of the intellect, and the labours of abstract study; and they gradually raise it above the

attachments of sense, and prepare it for the enjoyments of virtue.

So consonant is this to experience, that, in the education of youth, no object has in every age appeared more important to wise men, than to tincture them early with a relish for the entertainments of taste. The transition is commonly made with ease from these to the discharge of the higher and more important duties of life. Good hopes may be entertained of those whose minds have this liberal and elegant turn. It is favourable to many virtues. Whereas, to be entirely devoid of relish for eloquence, poetry, or any of the fine arts, is justly construed to be an unpromising symptom of youth; and raises suspicions of their being prone to low gratifications, or destined to drudge in the more vulgar and illiberal pursuits of life.

There are indeed few good dispositions of any kind with which the improvement of taste is not more or less connected. A cultivated taste increases sensibility to all the tender and humane passions, by giving them frequent exercise; while it tends to weaken the more violent and fierce emotions.

—*Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.**

The elevated sentiments and high examples which poetry, eloquence and history are often bringing under our view, naturally tend to nourish in our minds public spirit, the love of glory, contempt of external fortune, and the admiration of what is truly illustrious and great.

I will not go so far as to say that the improvement of taste and of virtue is the same; or that they may always be expected to co-exist in an equal degree. More powerful correctives than taste can apply, are

* These polish'd arts have humaniz'd mankind,
Softens'd the rude, and calm'd the boist'rous mind.

necessary for reforming the corrupt propensities which too frequently prevail among mankind. Elegant speculations are sometimes found to float on the surface of the mind, while bad passions possess the interior regions of the heart. At the same time, this cannot but be admitted, that the exercise of taste is, in its native tendency, moral and purifying. From reading the most admired productions of genius, whether in poetry or prose, almost every one rises with some good impressions left on his mind ; and though these may not always be durable, they are at least to be ranked among the means of disposing the heart to virtue. One thing is certain, and I shall hereafter have occasion to illustrate it more fully, that, without possessing the virtuous affections in a strong degree, no man can attain eminence in the sublime parts of eloquence. He must feel what a good man feels, if he expects greatly to move or to interest mankind. They are the ardent sentiments of honour, virtue, magnanimity, and public spirit, that only can kindle that fire of genius, and call up into the mind those high ideas, which attract the admiration of ages : and if this spirit be necessary to produce the most distinguished efforts of eloquence, it must be necessary also to our relishing them with proper taste and feeling.

On these general topics I shall dwell no longer ; but proceed directly to the consideration of the subjects which are to employ the following Lectures. They divide themselves into five parts. First, some introductory dissertations on the nature of taste, and upon the sources of its pleasures. Secondly, the consideration of language : Thirdly, of style : Fourthly, of eloquence, properly so called, or public speaking in its different kinds. Lastly, a critical examination of the most distinguished species of composition, both in prose and verse.

LECTURE II.

TASTE.

THE nature of the present undertaking leads me to begin with some enquiries concerning taste, as it is this faculty which is always appealed to, in disquisitions concerning the merit of discourse and writing.

There are few subjects on which men talk more loosely and indistinctly than on taste ; few, which it is more difficult to explain with precision ; and none, which in this course of lectures will appear more dry or abstract. What I have to say on the subject, shall be in the following order. I shall first explain the nature of taste, as a power or faculty in the human mind. I shall next consider, how far it is an improveable faculty. I shall show the sources of its improvement, and the characters of taste, in its most perfect state. I shall then examine the various fluctuations to which it is liable, and enquire whether there be any standard, to which we can bring the different tastes of men, in order to distinguish the corrupted from the true.

Taste may be defined, " The power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art."

The first question that occurs, concerning it, is, whether it is to be considered as an internal sense, or as an exertion of reason? Reason is a very general term; but if we understand by it, that power of the mind which in speculative matters discovers truth, and in practical matters judges of the fitness of means to an end, I apprehend the question may be easily answered. For nothing can be more clear, than that taste is not resolvable into any such operation of reason. It is not merely through a discovery of the understanding, or a deduction of argument, that the mind receives pleasure from a beautiful prospect or a fine poem. Such objects often strike us intuitively, and make a strong impression, when we are unable to assign the reasons of our being pleased. They sometimes strike in the same manner the philosopher and the peasant—the boy and the man. Hence the faculty, by which we relish such beauties, seems more nearly allied to a feeling of sense, than to a process of the understanding: and accordingly, from an external sense it has borrowed its name; that sense by which we receive and distinguish the pleasures of food, having, in several languages, given rise to the word taste, in the metaphorical meaning under which we now consider it. However, as, in all subjects which regard the operations of the mind, the inaccurate use of words is to be carefully avoided, it must not be inferred from what I have said, that reason is entirely excluded from the exertions of taste. Though taste, beyond doubt, be ultimately founded on a certain natural and instinctive sensibility to beauty, yet reason, as I shall show hereafter, assists taste in many of its operations, and serves to enlarge its power*.

* See dr. Gerard's Essay on Taste—D'Alembert's Reflexions on the Use and Abuse of Philosophy in matters which relate to Taste—Reflexions Critiques sur la Poësie et sur la Peinture tome ii. ch. 22—31—Elements of Criticism, chap. 25—M

Taste, in the sense in which I have explained it, is a faculty common in some degree to all men. Nothing, that belongs to human nature, is more general than the relish of beauty of one kind or other—of what is orderly, proportioned, grand, harmonious, new, or sprightly. In children, the rudiments of taste discover themselves very early in a thousand instances; in their fondness for regular bodies, their admiration of pictures and statues, and imitations of all kinds; and their strong attachment to whatever is new or marvellous. The most ignorant peasants are delighted with ballads and tales, and are struck with the beautiful appearances of nature, in the earth and heavens. Even in the deserts of America, where human nature shows itself in its most uncultivated state, the savages have their ornaments of dress, their war and their death songs, their harangues, and their orators. We must, therefore, conclude the principles of taste to be deeply founded in the human mind. It is no less essential to man, to have some discernment of beauty, than it is to possess the attributes of reason and of speech*.

Hume's Essay on the Standard of Taste—Introduction to the Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful.

* On the subject of taste, considered as a power or faculty of the mind, much less is to be found among the ancient, than among the modern rhetorical and critical writers. The following remarkable passage in Cicero serves however to show, that his ideas on this subject agree perfectly with what has been said above. He is speaking of the beauties of style and numbers. "*Illud autem nequis admiretur quonam modo hæc vulgus imperitorum in audiendo, notet; cum in omni genere, tum in hoc ipso, magna quædam est vis, incredibilisque naturæ. Omnes enim tacito quodam sensu, sine ulla arte aut ratione, quæ sint in artibus de rationibus recta et prava dijudicant: idque cum faciunt in picturis, et in signis, et in aliis operibus, ad quorum intelligentiam a natura minus habent instrumenti, tum multo ostendunt magis in verborum, numerorum, vocumque judicio; quod ea sunt in communibus infixæ sensibus: nec earum rerum quenquam funditus natura voluit esse*

But although none be wholly devoid of this faculty, yet the degrees in which it is possessed are widely different. In some men only the feeble glimmerings of taste appear ; the beauties which they relish, are of the coarsest kind ; and of these they have but a weak and confused impression : while in others, taste rises to an acute discernment, and a lively enjoyment of the most refined beauties. In general, we may observe, that in the powers and pleasures of taste, there is a more remarkable inequality among men, than is usually found, in point of common sense, reason, and judgment. The constitution of our nature in this, as in all other respects, discovers admirable wisdom. In the distribution of those talents which are necessary for man's well-being, nature hath made less distinction among her children. But in the distribution of those which belong only to the ornamental part of life, she hath bestowed her favours with more frugality. She hath both sown the seeds more sparingly ; and rendered a higher culture requisite, for bringing them to perfection.

This inequality of taste among men, is owing, without doubt, in part, to the different frame of their natures—to nicer organs, and finer internal powers, with which some are endowed beyond others. But, if it be owing in part to nature, it is owing to education and culture still more. The illustration of this leads to my next remark on this

“*expertem.*” Cic. de Orat. lib. iii. cap. 50. edit. Gruteri.—Quintilian seems to include taste (for which, in the sense which we now give to that word, the ancients appear to have had no distinct name) under what he calls *judicium*. “*Locus de judicio, mea quidem opinione adeo partibus hujus operis omnibus connectus ac mixtus est, ut ne a sententiis quidem aut verbis saltem singulis possit separari, nec magis arte traditur quam gustus aut odor. Ut contraria vitemus et communia, ne quid in eloquendo corruptum obscurumque sit, referatur oportet ad sensus qui non docentur.*” Institut. lib. vi. cap. 3. edit. Obrechtii.

subject, that taste is a most improvable faculty, if there be any such in human nature ; a remark which gives great encouragement to such a course of study as we are now proposing to pursue. Of the truth of this assertion we may easily be convinced, by only reflecting on that immense superiority which education and improvement give to civilized, above barbarous nations, in refinement of taste ; and on the superiority which they give in the same nation, to those who have studied the liberal arts, above the rude and untaught vulgar. The difference is so great that there is perhaps no one particular, in which these two classes of men are so far removed from each other, as in respect of the powers and the pleasures of taste : and assuredly for this difference no other general cause can be assigned, but culture and education.—I shall now proceed to show what the means are, by which taste becomes so remarkably susceptible of cultivation and progress.

Reflect, first, upon that great law of our nature, that exercise is the chief source of improvement in all our faculties. This holds both in our bodily, and in our mental powers. It holds even in our external senses, although these be less the subject of cultivation, than any of our other faculties. We see how acute the senses become, in persons whose trade or business leads to nice exertions of them. Touch, for instance, becomes infinitely more exquisite in men whose employment requires them to examine the polish of bodies, than it is in others. They who deal in microscopical observations, or are accustomed to engrave on precious stones, acquire surprising accuracy of sight, in discerning the minutest objects : and practice, in attending to different flavours and tastes of liquors, wonderfully improves the power of distinguishing them, and of tracing their composition. Placing internal taste, therefore, on the footing of a simple sense, it cannot be doubted, that frequent ex-

ercise, and curious attention to its proper objects must greatly heighten its power. Of this we have one clear proof in that part of taste, which is called an ear for music. Experience every day shows, that nothing is more improvable. Only the simplest and plainest compositions are relished at first ; use and practice extend our pleasure ; teach us to relish finer melody ; and by degrees enable us to enter into the intricate and compounded pleasures of harmony. So an eye for the beauties of painting is never all at once acquired. It is gradually formed by being conversant among pictures, and studying the works of the best masters.

Precisely in the same manner, with respect to the beauty of composition and discourse, attention to the most approved models, study of the best authors, comparisons of lower and higher degrees of the same beauties, operate towards the refinement of taste. When one is only beginning his acquaintance with works of genius, the sentiment which attends them is obscure and confused. He cannot point out the several excellencies or blemishes of a performance which he peruses ; he is at a loss on what to rest his judgment ; all that can be expected is, that he should tell in general whether he be pleased or not. But allow him more experience in works of this kind, and his taste becomes by degrees more exact and enlightened. He begins to perceive not only the character of the whole, but the beauties and defects of each part ; and is able to describe the peculiar qualities which he praises or blames. The mist is dissipated, which seemed formerly to hang over the object ; and he can at length pronounce firmly, and without hesitation, concerning it. Thus in taste, considered as mere sensibility, exercise opens a great source of improvement.

But although taste be ultimately founded on sensibility, it must not be considered as instinctive sensibility alone. Reason and good sense, as I before

hinted, have so extensive an influence on all the operations and decisions of taste, that a thorough good taste may well be considered as a power compounded of natural sensibility to beauty, and of improved understanding. In order to be satisfied of this, let us observe, that the greater part of the productions of genius are no other than imitations of nature—representations of the characters, actions, or manners of men. The pleasure we receive from such imitations, or representations, is founded on mere taste : but to judge whether they be properly executed, belongs to the understanding, which compares the copy with the original.

In reading, for instance, such a poem as the *Æneid*, a great part of our pleasure arises from the plan or story being well conducted, and all the parts joined together with probability and due connexion—from the characters being taken from nature, the sentiments being suited to the characters, and the style to the sentiments. The pleasure which arises from a poem so conducted, is felt or enjoyed by taste, as an internal sense : but the discovery of this conduct in the poem is owing to reason ; and the more that reason enables us to discover such propriety in the conduct, the greater will be our pleasure. We are pleased, through our natural sense of beauty. Reason shows us why, and upon what grounds we are pleased. Wherever, in works of taste, any resemblance to nature is aimed at—wherever there is any reference of parts to a whole—or of means to an end, as there is indeed in almost every writing and discourse, there the understanding must always have a great part to act.

Here then is a wide field for reason's exerting its powers, in relation to the objects of taste, particularly with respect to composition and works of genius ; and hence arises a second and a very considerable source of the improvement of taste, from the

application of reason and good sense to such productions of genius. Spurious beauties, such as unnatural characters, forced sentiments, affected style, may please for a little: but they please only because their opposition to nature and to good sense has not been examined, or attended to. Once show how nature might have been more justly imitated or represented—how the writer might have managed his subject to greater advantage—the illusion will presently be dissipated, and these false beauties will please no more.

From these two sources, then, first, the frequent exercise of taste, and next, the application of good sense and reason to the objects of taste, taste as a power of the mind receives its improvement. In its perfect state, it is undoubtedly the result both of nature and of art. It supposes our natural sense of beauty to be refined by frequent attention to the most beautiful objects, and at the same time to be guided and improved by the light of the understanding.

I must be allowed to add, that as a sound head, so likewise a good heart, is a very material requisite to just taste. The moral beauties are not only in themselves superior to all others, but they exert an influence, either more near or more remote, on a great variety of other objects of taste. Wherever the affections, characters, or actions of men are concerned (and these certainly afford the noblest subjects to genius), there can be neither any just or affecting description of them, nor any thorough feeling of the beauty of that description, without our possessing the virtuous affections. He, whose heart is indelicate or hard, he who has no admiration of what is truly noble or praiseworthy, nor the proper sympathetic sense of what is soft and tender, must have a very imperfect relish of the highest beauties of eloquence and poetry.

The characters of taste, when brought to its most improved state, are all reducible to two, delicacy and correctness.

Delicacy of taste respects principally the perfection of that natural sensibility on which taste is founded. It implies those finer organs or powers, which enable us to discover beauties that lie hid from a vulgar eye. One may have strong sensibility, and yet be deficient in delicate taste. He may be deeply impressed by such beauties as he perceives ; but he perceives only what is in some degree coarse, what is bold and palpable ; while chaster and simpler ornaments escape his notice. In this state, taste generally exists among rude and unrefined nations. But a person of delicate taste both feels strongly, and feels accurately. He sees distinctions and differences where others see none ; the most latent beauty does not escape him ; and he is sensible of the smallest blemish. Delicacy of taste is judged of by the same marks that we use in judging of the delicacy of an external sense. As the goodness of the palate is not tried by strong flavours, but by a mixture of ingredients, where, notwithstanding the confusion, we remain sensible of each ; in like manner, delicacy of internal taste appears, by a quick and lively sensibility to its finest, most compounded, or most latent objects.

Correctness of taste respects chiefly the improvement which that faculty receives through its connexion with the understanding. A man of correct taste is one who is never imposed on by counterfeit beauties—who carries always in his mind that standard of good sense, which he employs in judging of every thing. He estimates with propriety the comparative merit of the several beauties which he meets with in any work of genius ; refers them to their proper classes ; assigns the principles, as far as they can be traced, whence their power

of pleasing flows : and is pleased himself precisely in that degree in which he ought, and no more.

It is true, that these two qualities of taste, delicacy and correctness, mutually imply each other. No taste can be exquisitely delicate without being correct ; nor can be thoroughly correct, without being delicate. But still a predominancy of one or other quality in the mixture is often visible. The power of delicacy is chiefly seen in discerning the true merit of a work ; the power of correctness, in rejecting false pretensions to merit. Delicacy leans more to feeling ; correctness more to reason and judgment. The former is more the gift of nature ; the latter, more the product of culture and art. Among the ancient critics, Longinus possessed most delicacy ; Aristotle most correctness. Among the moderns, mr. Addison is a high example of delicate taste ; dean Swift, had he written on the subject of criticism, would perhaps have afforded the example of a correct one.

Having viewed taste in its most improved and perfect state, I come next to consider its deviations from that state, the fluctuations and changes to which it is liable ; and to enquire, whether, in the midst of these, there be any means of distinguishing a true from a corrupted taste. This brings us to the most difficult part of our task. For it must be acknowledged, that no principle of the human mind is, in its operations, more fluctuating and capricious than taste. Its variations have been so great and frequent, as to create a suspicion with some, of its being merely arbitrary—grounded on no foundation, ascertainable by no standard, but wholly dependent on changing fancy ; the consequence of which would be, that all studies or regular enquiries concerning the objects of taste, were vain. In architecture, the Grecian models were long esteemed the most perfect. In succeeding ages, the Gothic

architecture alone prevailed, and afterwards the Grecian taste revived in all its vigour, and engrossed the public admiration. In eloquence and poetry, the Asiatics at no time relished any thing but what was full of ornament, and splendid in a degree that we should denominate gawdy ; whilst the Greeks admired only chaste and simple beauties, and despised the Asiatic ostentation. In our own country, how many writings that were greatly extolled two or three centuries ago, are now fallen into entire disrepute and oblivion ? Without going back to remote instances, how very different is the taste of poetry which prevails in Great Britain now, from what prevailed there no longer ago than the reign of king Charles II. which the authors too of that time deemed an Augustan age : when nothing was in vogue but an affected brilliancy of wit ; when the simple majesty of Milton was overlooked, and Paradise Lost almost entirely unknown ; when Cowley's laboured and unnatural conceits were admired as the very quintessence of genius ; Waller's gay sprightliness was mistaken for the tender spirit of love poetry ; and such writers as Suckling and Etheridge were held in esteem for dramatic composition ?

The question is, what conclusion we are to form from such instances as these ? Is there any thing that can be called a standard of taste, by appealing to which we may distinguish between a good and a bad taste ? Or is there in truth no such distinction ; and are we to hold that, according to the proverb, there is no disputing of tastes ; but whatever pleases is right, for that reason that it does please ? This is the question, and a very nice and subtle one it is, which we are now to discuss.

I begin by observing, that if there be no such thing as any standard of taste, this consequence must immediately follow, that all tastes are equally

good ; a position, which, though it may pass unnoticed in slight matters, and when we speak of the lesser differences among the tastes of men, yet when we apply it to the extremes, presently shows its absurdity. For is there any one who will seriously maintain that the taste of a Hottentot or a Laplander is as delicate and as correct as that of a Longinus or an Addison ? or, that he can be charged with no defect or incapacity who thinks a common news-writer as excellent an historian as Tacitus ? As it would be held downright extravagance to talk in this manner, we are led unavoidably to this conclusion, that there is some foundation for the preference of one man's taste to that of another ; or, that there is a good and a bad, a right and a wrong in taste, as in other things.

But to prevent mistakes on this subject, it is necessary to observe, next, that the diversity of tastes which prevails among mankind, does not in every case infer corruption of taste, or oblige us to seek for some standard in order to determine who are in the right. The tastes of men may differ very considerably as to their object, and yet none of them be wrong. One man relishes poetry most ; another takes pleasure in nothing but history. One prefers comedy ; another, tragedy. One admires the simple ; another, the ornamented style. The young are amused with gay and sprightly compositions. The elderly are more entertained with those of a graver cast. Some nations delight in bold pictures of manners, and strong representations of passion. Others incline to more correct and regular elegance both in description and sentiment. Though all differ, yet all pitch upon some one beauty which peculiarly suits their turn of mind ; and therefore no one has a title to condemn the rest. It is not in matters of taste, as in questions of mere reason, where there is but one conclusion that can be true, and all the

rest are erroneous. Truth, which is the object of reason, is one ; beauty, which is the object of taste, is manifold. Taste therefore admits of latitude and diversity of objects, in sufficient consistency with goodness or justness of taste.

But then, to explain this matter thoroughly, I must observe farther, that this admissible diversity of tastes can only have place where the objects of taste are different. Where it is with respect to the same object that men disagree, when one condemns that as ugly, which another admires as highly beautiful ; then it is no longer diversity, but direct opposition of taste that takes place ; and therefore one must be in the right and another in the wrong, unless that absurd paradox were allowed to hold, that all tastes are equally good and true. One man prefers Virgil to Homer. Suppose that I, on the other hand, admire Homer more than Virgil. I have as yet no reason to say that our tastes are contradictory. The other person is most struck with the elegance and tenderness which are the characteristics of Virgil ; I, with the simplicity and fire of Homer. As long as neither of us deny that both Homer and Virgil have great beauties, our difference falls within the compass of that diversity of tastes, which I have showed to be natural and allowable. But if the other man shall assert that Homer has no beauties whatever ; that he holds him to be a dull and spiritless writer, and that he would as soon peruse any old legend of knight-errantry as the Iliad ; then I exclaim, that my antagonist either is void of all taste, or that his taste is corrupted in a miserable degree ; and I appeal to whatever I think the standard of taste, to show him that he is in the wrong.

What that standard is, to which, in such opposition of tastes, we are obliged to have recourse, remains to be traced. A standard properly signifies, that which is of such undoubted authority as to be

the test of other things of the same kind. Thus a standard weight or measure, is that which is appointed by law to regulate all other measures and weights. Thus the court is said to be the standard of good breeding; and the scripture, of theological truth.

When we say that nature is the standard of taste, we lay down a principle very true and just, as far as it can be applied. There is no doubt, that in all cases where an imitation is intended of some object that exists in nature, as in representing human characters or actions, conformity to nature affords a full and distinct criterion of what is truly beautiful. Reason hath in such cases full scope for exerting its authority, for approving or condemning; by comparing the copy with the original. But there are innumerable cases in which this rule cannot be at all applied; and conformity to nature, is an expression frequently used, without any distinct or determinate meaning. We must therefore search for somewhat that can be rendered more clear and precise, to be the standard of taste.

Taste, as I before explained it, is ultimately founded on an internal sense of beauty, which is natural to men, and which, in its application to particular objects, is capable of being guided and enlightened by reason. Now, were there any one person who possessed in full perfection all the powers of human nature, whose internal senses were in every instance exquisite and just, and whose reason was unerring and sure, the determinations of such a person concerning beauty, would, beyond doubt, be a perfect standard for the taste of all others. Wherever their taste differed from his, it could be imputed only to some imperfection in their natural powers. But as there is no such living standard, no one person to whom all mankind will allow such submission to be due, what is there of sufficient authority to be the

standard of the various and opposite tastes of men? Most certainly there is nothing but the taste, as far as it can be gathered, of human nature. That which men concur the most in admiring, must be held to be beautiful. His taste must be esteemed just and true, which coincides with the general sentiments of men. In this standard we must rest. To the sense of mankind the ultimate appeal must ever lie, in all works of taste. If any one should maintain that sugar was bitter and tobacco was sweet, no reasonings could avail to prove it. The taste of such a person would infallibly be held to be diseased, merely because it differed so widely from the taste of the species to which he belongs. In like manner, with regard to the objects of sentiment or internal taste, the common feelings of men carry the same authority, and have a title to regulate the taste of every individual.


But have we then, it will be said, no other criterion of what is beautiful, than the approbation of the majority? Must we collect the voices of others, before we form any judgment for ourselves, of what deserves applause in eloquence or poetry? By no means; there are principles of reason and sound judgment which can be applied to matters of taste as well as to the subjects of science and philosophy. He who admires or censures any work of genius, is always ready, if his taste be in any degree improved, to assign some reasons of his decision. He appeals to principles, and points out the grounds on which he proceeds. Taste is a sort of compound power, in which the light of the understanding always mingles, more or less, with the feelings of sentiment.

But, though reason can carry us a certain length in judging concerning works of taste, it is not to be forgotten that the ultimate conclusions to which our reasonings lead, refer at last to sense and perception. We may speculate and argue concerning pro-

priety of conduct in a tragedy, or an epic poem. Just reasonings on the subject will correct the caprice of unenlightened taste, and establish principles for judging of what deserves praise. But, at the same time, these reasonings appeal always, in the last resort, to feeling. The foundation upon which they rest, is what has been found from experience to please mankind universally. Upon this ground we prefer a simple and natural, to an artificial and affected style ; a regular and well-connected story, to loose and scattered narratives ; a catastrophe which is tender and pathetic, to one which leaves us unmoved. It is from consulting our own imagination and heart, and from attending to the feelings of others, that any principles are formed which acquire authority in matters of taste.*

When we refer to the concurring sentiments of men, as the ultimate test of what is to be accounted beautiful in the arts, this is to be always understood

* The difference between the authors who found the standard of taste upon the common feelings of human nature, ascertained by general approbation, and those who found it upon established principles, which can be ascertained by reason, is more an apparent than a real difference. Like many other literary controversies, it turns chiefly on modes of expression. For they who lay the greatest stress on sentiment and feeling, make no scruple of applying argument and reason to matters of taste. They appeal, like other writers, to established principles, in judging of the excellencies of eloquence or poetry ; and plainly show, that the general approbation, to which they ultimately recur, is an approbation refusing from discussion as well as from sentiment. They, on the other hand, who, in order to vindicate taste from any suspicion of being arbitrary, maintain that it is ascertainable by the standard of reason, admit, nevertheless, that what pleases universally, must, on that account, be held to be truly beautiful ; and that no rules or conclusions, concerning objects of taste, can have any just authority, if they be found to contradict the general sentiments of men. These two systems, therefore, differ in reality very little from one another. Sentiment and reason enter into both ; and by allowing to each of these powers its due place, both systems may be rendered consistent. Accordingly, it is in this light that I have endeavoured to place the subject.



of men placed in such situations as are favourable to the proper exertions of taste. Every one must perceive, that among rude and uncivilized nations, and during the ages of ignorance and darkness, any loose notions that are entertained concerning such subjects, carry no authority. In those states of society, taste has no materials on which to operate. It is either totally suppressed, or appears in its lowest and most imperfect form. We refer to the sentiments of mankind in polished and flourishing nations; when arts are cultivated and manners refined; when works of genius are subjected to free discussion, and taste is improved by science and philosophy.

Even among nations at such a period of society, I admit, that accidental causes may occasionally warp the proper operations of taste; sometimes the state of religion, sometimes the form of government, may for a while pervert it; a licentious court may introduce a taste for false ornaments, and dissolute writings. The usage of one admired genius may procure approbation for his faults, and even render them fashionable. Sometimes envy may have power to bear down, for a little, productions of great merit; while popular humour, or party spirit, may, at other times, exalt to a high, though short-lived reputation, what little deserved it. But though such casual circumstances give the appearance of caprice to the judgments of taste, that appearance is easily corrected. In the course of time, the genuine taste of human nature never fails to disclose itself, and to gain the ascendant over any fantastic and corrupted modes of taste which may chance to have been introduced. These may have currency for a while, and mislead superficial judges; but being subjected to examination, by degrees they pass away; while that alone remains which is founded on sound reason, and the native feelings of men.

I by no means pretend, that there is any standard of taste, to which, in every particular instance, we can resort for clear and immediate determination. Where, indeed, is such a standard to be found, for deciding any of those great controversies in reason and philosophy, which perpetually divide mankind? In the present case, there was plainly no occasion for any such strict and absolute provision to be made. In order to judge of what is morally good or evil, of what man ought, or ought not in duty to do, it was fit that the means of clear and precise determination should be afforded us. But to ascertain in every case with the utmost exactness what is beautiful or elegant, was not at all necessary to the happiness of man. And therefore some diversity in feeling was here allowed to take place; and room was left for discussion and debate, concerning the degree of approbation to which any work of genius is entitled.

The conclusion, which it is sufficient for us to rest upon, is, that taste is far from being an arbitrary principle, which is subject to the fancy of every individual, and which admits of no criterion for determining whether it be false or true. Its foundation is the same in all human minds. It is built upon sentiments and perceptions which belong to our nature; and which, in general, operate with the same uniformity as our other intellectual principles. When these sentiments are perverted by ignorance and prejudice, they are capable of being rectified by reason. Their sound and natural state is ultimately determined, by comparing them with the general taste of mankind. Let men declaim as much as they please, concerning the caprice and the uncertainty of taste, it is found, by experience, that there are beauties, which, if they be displayed in a proper light, have power to command lasting and general admiration. In every composition, what

interests the imagination, and touches the heart, pleases all ages and all nations. There is a certain string, to which, when properly struck, the human heart is so made as to answer.

Hence the universal testimony which the most improved nations of the earth have conspired, throughout a long tract of ages, to give to some few works of genius; such as the *Iliad* of Homer, and the *Æneid* of Virgil. Hence the authority which such works have acquired as standards, in some degree, of poetical composition; since from them we are enabled to collect what the sense of mankind is, concerning those beauties which give them the highest pleasure, and which therefore poetry ought to exhibit. Authority or prejudice may, in one age or country, give a temporary reputation to an indifferent poet, or a bad artist: but when foreigners, or when posterity examine his works, his faults are discerned, and the genuine taste of human nature appears. "*Opinionum commenta delet dies; naturæ judicia confirmat.*" Time overthrows the illusions of opinion, but establishes the decisions of nature.

LECTURE III.

CRITICISM.—GENIUS.—PLEASURES OF TASTE.—
SUBLIMITY IN OBJECTS.

TASTE, criticism, and genius, are words currently employed, without distinct ideas annexed to them. In beginning a course of lectures, where such words must often occur, it is necessary to ascertain their meaning with some precision. Having in the last lecture treated of taste, I proceed to explain the nature and foundation of criticism. True criticism is the application of taste and of good sense to the several fine arts. The object which it proposes is, to distinguish what is beautiful and what is faulty in every performance; from particular instances, to ascend to general principles; and so to form rules or conclusions, concerning the several kinds of beauty in works of genius.

The rules of criticism are not formed by any induction, a priori, as it is called; that is, they are not formed by a train of abstract reasoning, independent of facts and observations. Criticism is an art founded wholly on experience—on the observation of such beauties as have come nearest to the standard which I before established; that is, of

such beauties as have been found to please mankind most generally. For example ; Aristotle's rules concerning the unity of action in dramatic and epic composition, were not rules first discovered by logical reasoning, and then applied to poetry ; but they were drawn from the practice of Homer and Sophocles : they were founded upon observing the superior pleasure which we receive from the relation of an action which is one and entire, beyond what we receive from the relation of scattered and unconnected facts. Such observations, taking their rise at first from feeling and experience, were found, on examination, to be so consonant to reason, and to the principles of human nature, as to pass into established rules, and to be conveniently applied for judging of the excellency of any performance. This is the most natural account of the origin of criticism.

A masterly genius, it is true, will, of himself, untaught, compose in such a manner as shall be agreeable to the most material rules of criticism ; for as these rules are founded in nature, nature will often suggest them in practice. Homer, it is more than probable, was acquainted with no systems of the art of poetry. Guided by genius alone, he composed in verse a regular story, which all posterity has admired. But this is no argument against the usefulness of criticism as an art. For as no human genius is perfect, there is no writer but may receive assistance from critical observations upon the beauties and faults of those who have gone before him. No observations or rules can indeed supply the defect of genius, or inspire it where it is wanting. But they may often direct it into its proper channel ; they may correct its extravagancies, and point out to it the most just and proper imitation of nature. Critical rules are designed chiefly to show the faults that ought to be avoided. To na-

ture we must be indebted for the production of eminent beauties.

From what has been said, we are enabled to form a judgment concerning those complaints, which it has been long fashionable for petty authors to make, against critics and criticism. Critics have been represented as the great abridgers of the native liberty of genius—as the imposers of unnatural shackles and bonds upon writers, from whose cruel persecution they must fly to the public and implore its protection. Such supplicatory prefaces are not calculated to give very favourable ideas of the genius of the author. For every good writer will be pleased to have his work examined by the principles of sound understanding and true taste. The declamations against criticism commonly proceed upon this supposition, that critics are such as judge by rule, not by feeling; which is so far from being true, that they who judge after this manner are pedants, not critics. For all the rules of genuine criticism I have shown to be ultimately founded on feeling; and taste and feeling are necessary to guide us in the application of these rules to every particular instance. As there is nothing in which all sorts of persons more readily affect to be judges, than in works of taste, there is no doubt, that the number of incompetent critics will always be great. But this affords no more foundation for a general invective against criticism, than the number of bad philosophers or reasoners affords against reason and philosophy.

An objection more plausible may be formed against criticism, from the applause that some performances have received from the public, which, when accurately considered, are found to contradict the rules established by criticism. Now, according to the principles laid down in the last lecture, the public is the supreme judge to whom the last ap-

peal must be made in every work of taste ; as the standard of taste is founded on the sentiments that are natural and common to all men.' But with respect to this, we are to observe, that the sense of the public is often too hastily judged of. 'The genuine public taste does not always appear in the first applause given upon the publication of any new work. There are both a great vulgar and a small, apt to be caught and dazzled by very superficial beauties, the admiration of which, in a little time, passes away : and sometimes a writer may acquire great temporary reputation merely by his compliance with the passions or prejudices, with the party-spirit or superstitious notions, that may chance to rule for a time almost a whole nation. In such cases, though the public may seem to praise, true criticism may with reason condemn ; and it will in progress of time gain the ascendant : for the judgment of true criticism, and the voice of the public, when once become unprejudiced and dispassionate, will ever coincide at last.

Instances, I admit, there are, of some works that contain gross transgressions of the laws of criticism, acquiring, nevertheless, a general, and even a lasting admiration. Such are the plays of Shakespeare, which, considered as dramatic poems, are irregular in the highest degree. But then we are to remark, that they have gained the public admiration, not by their being irregular, not by their transgressions of the rules of art, but in spite of such transgressions. They possess other beauties which are conformable to just rules ; and the force of these beauties has been so great, as to overpower all censure, and to give the public a degree of satisfaction superior to the disgust arising from their blemishes. Shakespeare pleases, not by his bringing the transactions of many years into one play—not by his grotesque mixtures of tra-

gedy and comedy in one piece—nor by the strained thoughts, and affected witticisms, which he sometimes employs. These we consider as blemishes, and impute them to the grossness of the age in which he lived. But he pleases by his animated and masterly representations of characters, by the liveliness of his descriptions, the force of his sentiments, and his possessing, beyond all writers, the natural language of passion : beauties which true criticism no less teaches us to place in the highest rank, than nature teaches us to feel.

I proceed next to explain the meaning of another term, which there will be frequent occasion to employ in these lectures ; that is, genius.

Taste and genius are two words frequently joined together ; and therefore, by inaccurate thinkers confounded. They signify, however, two quite different things. The difference between them can be clearly pointed out ; and it is of importance to remember it. Taste consists in the power of judging : genius, in the power of executing. One may have a considerable degree of taste in poetry, eloquence, or any of the fine arts, who has little or hardly any genius for composition or execution in any of these arts : but genius cannot be found without including taste also. Genius, therefore, deserves to be considered as a higher power of the mind than taste. Genius always imports something inventive or creative ; which does not rest in mere sensibility to beauty where it is perceived, but which can, moreover, produce new beauties, and exhibit them in such a manner as strongly to impress the minds of others. Refined taste forms a good critic ; but genius is farther necessary to form the poet or the orator.

It is proper also to observe, that genius is a word, which, in common acceptation, extends much farther than to the objects of taste. It is used to signify

that talent or aptitude which we receive from nature, for excelling in any one thing whatever. Thus we speak of a genius for mathematics, as well as a genius for poetry—of a genius for war, for politics, or for any mechanical employment.

This talent or aptitude for excelling in some one particular, is, I have said, what we receive from nature. By art and study, no doubt, it may be greatly improved; but by them alone it cannot be acquired. As genius is a higher faculty than taste, it is ever, according to the usual frugality of nature, more limited in the sphere of its operations. It is not uncommon to meet with persons who have an excellent taste in several of the polite arts, such as music, poetry, painting, and eloquence, all together: but, to find one who is an excellent performer in all these arts, is much more rare; or rather, indeed, such an one is not to be looked for. A sort of universal genius, or one who is equally and indifferently turned towards several different professions and arts, is not likely to excel in any. Although there may be some few exceptions, yet in general it holds, that when the bent of the mind is wholly directed towards some one object, exclusive, in a manner, of others, there is the fairest prospect of eminence in that, whatever it be. The rays must converge to a point, in order to glow intensely. This remark I here choose to make, on account of its great importance to young people; in leading them to examine with care, and to pursue with ardour, the current and pointing of nature towards those exertions of genius in which they are most likely to excel.

A genius for any of the fine arts, as I before observed, always supposes taste; and it is clear, that the improvement of taste will serve both to forward and to correct the operations of genius. In proportion as the taste of a poet, or orator, be-

comes more refined with respect to the beauties of composition, it will certainly assist him to produce the more finished beauties in his work. Genius, however, in a poet or orator, may sometimes exist in a higher degree than taste; that is, genius may be bold and strong, when taste is neither very delicate, nor very correct. This is often the case in the infancy of arts; a period when genius frequently exerts itself with great vigour, and executes with much warmth; while taste, which requires experience, and improves by slower degrees, hath not yet attained to its full growth. Homer and Shakespeare are proofs of what I now assert; in whose admirable writings are found instances of rudeness and indelicacy, which the more refined taste of later writers, who had far inferior genius to them, would have taught them to avoid. As all human perfection is limited, this may very probably be the law of our nature, that it is not given to one man to execute with vigour and fire, and, at the same time, to attend to all the lesser, and more refined graces that belong to the exact perfection of his work: while, on the other hand, a thorough taste for those inferior graces, is, for the most part, accompanied with a diminution of sublimity and force.

Having thus explained the nature of taste, the nature and importance of criticism, and the distinction between taste and genius; I am now to consider the sources of the pleasures of taste. Here opens a very extensive field; no less than all the pleasures of the imagination, as they are commonly called, whether afforded us by natural objects, or by the imitations and descriptions of them. But it is not necessary to the purpose of my lectures, that all these should be examined fully; the pleasure which we receive from discourse, or writing, being the main object of them. All that I propose, is

to give some openings into the pleasures of taste in general ; and to insist more particularly upon sublimity and beauty.

We are far from having yet attained to any system concerning this subject. Mr. Addison was the first who attempted a regular enquiry, in his essay on the pleasures of the imagination, published in the sixth volume of the spectator. He has reduced these pleasures under three heads ; beauty, grandeur, and novelty. His speculations on this subject, if not exceedingly profound, are, however, very beautiful and entertaining ; and he has the merit of having opened a track, which was before unbeaten. The advances made since his time in this curious part of philosophical criticism, are not very considerable ; though some ingenious writers have pursued the subject. This is owing, doubtless, to that thinness and subtilty which are found to be properties of all the feelings of taste. They are engaging objects ; but when we would lay firm hold of them, and subject them to a regular discussion, they are always ready to elude our grasp. It is difficult to make a full enumeration of the several objects that give pleasure to taste ; it is more difficult to define all those which have been discovered, and to reduce them under proper classes ; and, when we would go farther, and investigate the efficient causes of the pleasure which we receive from such objects, here, above all, we find ourselves at a loss. For instance ; we all learn by experience, that certain figures of bodies appear to us more beautiful than others. On enquiring farther, we find that the regularity of some figures, and the graceful variety of others, are the foundation of the beauty which we discern in them ; but when we attempt to go a step beyond this, and enquire what is the cause of regularity and variety producing in our minds the sensation of beauty, any reason we can assign is extremely imperfect. These first principles of internal sensation,

height or depth. Though a boundless plain be a grand object, yet a high mountain, to which we look up, or an awful precipice or tower whence we look down on the objects that lie below, is still more so. The excessive grandeur of the firmament arises from its height, joined to its boundless extent; and that of the ocean, not from its extent alone, but from the perpetual motion and irresistible force of that mass of waters. Wherever space is concerned, it is clear, that amplitude or greatness of extent, in one dimension or other, is necessary to grandeur. Remove all bounds from any object, and you presently render it sublime. Hence infinite space, endless numbers, and eternal duration, fill the mind with great ideas.

From this some have imagined, that vastness, or amplitude of extent, is the foundation of all sublimity. But I cannot be of this opinion, because many objects appear sublime which have no relation to space at all. Such, for instance, is great loudness of sound. The burst of thunder or of cannon, the roaring of winds, the shouting of multitudes, the sound of vast cataracts of water, are all incontestibly grand objects. "I heard the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters, and of mighty thunderings, saying Allelujah." In general we may observe, that great power and force exerted always raise sublime ideas; and perhaps the most copious source of these is derived from this quarter. Hence the grandeur of earthquakes and burning mountains; of great conflagrations; of the stormy ocean, and overflowing waters; of tempests of wind; of thunder and lightning; and of all the uncommon violence of the elements. Nothing is more sublime than mighty power and strength. A stream that runs within its banks, is a beautiful object; but when it rushes down with the impetuosity and noise of a torrent,

it presently becomes a sublime one. From lions, and other animals of strength, are drawn sublime comparisons in poets. A race-horse is looked upon with pleasure ; but it is the war-horse, " whose neck is clothed with thunder," that carries grandeur in its idea. The engagement of two great armies, as it is the highest exertion of human might, combines a variety of sources of the sublime ; and has accordingly been always considered as one of the most striking and magnificent spectacles that can be either presented to the eye, or exhibited to the imagination in description,

For the farther illustration of this subject, it is proper to remark, that all ideas of the solemn and awful kind and even bordering on the terrible, tend greatly to assist the sublime ; such as darkness, solitude, and silence. What are the scenes of nature that elevate the mind in the highest degree, and produce the sublime sensation ? Not the gay landscape, the flowery field, or the flourishing city ; but the hoary mountain, and the solitary lake ; the aged forest, and the torrent falling over the rock. Hence too, night-scenes are commonly the most sublime. The firmament when filled with stars, scattered in such vast numbers, and with such magnificent profusion, strikes the imagination with a more awful grandeur, than when we view it enlightened with all the splendor of the sun. The deep sound of a great bell, or the striking of a great clock, are at any time grand ; but, when heard amid the silence and stillness of the night, they become doubly so. Darkness is very commonly applied for adding sublimity to all our ideas of the Deity. " He maketh darkness his pavilion ; he dwelleth in the thick cloud." So Milton :

——How oft, amidst

Thick clouds and dark, does heaven's all-ruling Sire
Choose to reside, his glory unobscur'd,
And, with the majesty of darkness, round
Circles his throne——

BOOK II, 26

Observe, with how much art Virgil has introduced all those ideas of silence, vacancy, and darkness, when he is going to introduce his hero to the infernal regions; and to disclose the secrets of the great deep.

*Dii quibus imperium est animarum, umbræque silentæ,
Et chaos, et Phlegethon, loca nocte silentia late,
Sit mihi fas audita loqui; sit romine vestro
Pendere resonata terra, et caligine mœdæ.
Ibant obscuri, sola sub nocte, per umbram,
Perque domos Ditis vacuas, et inania regna;
Quale per incertam lunam, sub lucæ maligna
Est iter in sylvis——*.*

These passages I quote at present, not so much as instances of sublime writing, though in themselves they truly are so, as to show, by the effect of them, that the objects which they present to us, belong to the class of sublime ones.

Obscurity, we are farther to remark, is not unfavourable to the sublime. Though it render the object indistinct, the impression, however, may be great; for, as an ingenious author has well observed, it is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination; and the imagination may be strongly affected, and, in fact, often is so, by objects of which we have no clear conception. Thus we see, that almost all the

* Ye subterranean gods, whose awful sway
The gliding ghosts and silent shades obey;
O chaos hear! and Phlegethon profound!
Whose solemn empire stretches wide around!
Give me, ye great tremendous powers, to tell!
Of scenes and wonders in the depths of hell;
Give me your mighty secrets to display,
From those black realms of darkness to the day.

PITT.

Obscure they went; through dreary shades, that led
Along the waste dominions of the dead;
As wander travellers in woods by night,
By the moon's doubtful and malignant light.

DRYDEN.

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descriptions given us of the appearances of supernatural beings, carry some sublimity, though the conceptions which they afford us be confused and indistinct. Their sublimity arises from the ideas, which they always convey, of superior power and might, joined with an awful obscurity. We may see this fully exemplified in the following noble passage of the book of Job†. “ In thoughts from
“ the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth
“ upon men, fear came upon me, and trembling,
“ which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit
“ passed before my face; the hair of my flesh
“ stood up: it stood still; but I could not discern
“ the form thereof; an image was before mine
“ eyes; there was silence; and I heard a voice—
“ shall mortal man be more just than God*?” No ideas, it is plain, are so sublime as those taken from the Supreme Being—the most unknown, but the greatest of all objects; the infinity of whose nature, and the eternity of whose duration, joined with the omnipotence of his power, though they surpass our conceptions, yet exalt them to the highest. In general, all objects that are greatly raised above us, or far removed from us either in space or in time, are apt to strike us as great. Our viewing them, as through the mist of distance or antiquity, is favourable to the impressions of their sublimity.

† Chapter iv. ver. 15.

* The picture, which Lucretius has drawn, of the dominion of superstition over mankind, representing it as a portentous spectre, showing its head from the clouds, and dismaying the whole human race with its countenance, together with the magnanimity of Epicurus in raising himself up against it, carries all the grandeur of a sublime, obscure, and awful image.

*Humana ante oculos fœde cum vita jaceret
In terris, oppressa gravi sub religione,
Quæ caput a cœli regionibus ostendebat,
Horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans,
Primum Graius homo mortales tollere contra
Est oculos ausus.—*

Lib. I.

As obscurity, so disorder, too, is very compatible with grandeur; nay, frequently heightens it. Few things that are strictly regular, and methodical, appear sublime. We see the limits on every side; we feel ourselves confined; there is no room for the mind's exerting any great effort. Exact proportion of parts, though it enters often into the beautiful, is much disregarded in the sublime. A great mass of rocks, thrown together by the hand of nature, with wildness and confusion, strike the mind with more grandeur, than if they had been adjusted to one another with the most accurate symmetry.

In the feeble attempts, which human art can make towards producing grand objects (feeble, I mean, in comparison with the powers of nature), greatness of dimensions always constitutes a principal part. No pile of building can convey any idea of sublimity, unless it be ample and lofty. There is, too, in architecture, what is called greatness of manner; which seems chiefly to arise, from presenting the object to us in one full point of view; so that it shall make its impression whole, entire, and undivided, upon the mind. A Gothic cathedral raises ideas of grandeur in our minds, by its size, its height, its awful obscurity, its strength, its antiquity, and its durability.

There still remains to be mentioned one class of sublime objects, which may be called the moral, or sentimental sublime; arising from certain exertions of the human mind; from certain affections, and actions, of our fellow-creatures. These will be found to be all, or chiefly, of that class, which comes under the name of magnanimity or heroism; and they produce an effect extremely similar to what is produced by the view of grand objects in nature; filling the mind with admiration, and elevating it above itself. A noted instance of this, quoted by all

the French critics, is the celebrated *qu'il mourut* of Corneille, in the tragedy of Horace. In the famous combat betwixt the Horatii and the Curiatii, the old Horatius, being informed, that two of his sons are slain, and that the third had betaken himself to flight, at first will not believe the report ; but being thoroughly assured of the fact, is fired with all the sentiments of high honour and indignation at this supposed unworthy behaviour of his surviving son. He is reminded, that his son stood alone against three, and asked what he wished him to have done ?—" To have died,"—he answers. In the same manner, Porus, taken prisoner by Alexander after a gallant defence, and asked, how he wished to be treated ? answering, " like a king ;" and Cesar chiding the pilot who was afraid to set out with him in a storm, "*Quid times ? Caesarem vehis ;*" are good instances of this sentimental sublime. Wherever, in some critical and high situation, we behold a man uncommonly intrepid, and resting upon himself—superior to passion and to fear—animated by some great principle to the contempt of popular opinion, of selfish interest, of dangers, or of death ; there we are struck with a sense of the sublime.*

* The sublime, in natural and in moral objects, is brought before us in one view, and compared together, in the following beautiful passage of Akenfide's pleasures of the imagination :

Look then abroad through nature ; to the range
Of planets, suns, and adamantine spheres,
Wheeling, unshaken, through the void immense ;
And speak, O man ! does this capacious scene,
With half that kindling majesty, dilate
Thy strong conception, as when Brutus rose
Refulgent, from the stroke of Cesar's fate,
Amid the crowd of patriots ; and his arm
Aloft extending, like eternal Jove,
When guilt brings down the thunder, call'd aloud
On Tully's name, and shook his crimson steel,
And bade the father of his country hail !
For lo ! the tyrant prostrate on the dust ;
And Rome again is free.—

High virtue is the most natural and fertile source of this moral sublimity. However, on some occasions, where virtue either has no place, or is but imperfectly displayed, yet if extraordinary vigour and force of mind be discovered, we are not insensible to a degree of grandeur in the character; and from the splendid conqueror, or the daring conspirator, whom we are far from approving, we cannot withhold our admiration*.

I have now enumerated a variety of instances, both in inanimate objects and in human life, wherein the sublime appears. In all these instances, the emotion raised in us is of the same kind, although the objects that produce the emotion be of widely different kinds. A question next arises, whether we are able to discover some one fundamental quality in which all these different objects agree, and which is the cause of their producing an emotion of the same nature in our minds? Various hypotheses have been formed concerning this; but, as far as appears to me, hitherto unsatisfactory. Some have imagined that amplitude, or great extent, joined

* Silius Italicus has studied to give an august idea of Hannibal, by representing him as surrounded with all his victories, in the place of guards. One who had formed a design of assassinating him in the midst of a feast, is thus addressed:

Fallite, mensas inter quod credis inermem;
Tot bellis quæsitâ viro, tot cædibus, armat
Majestas æterna ducem. Si admoveris ora
Cannas & Trebiam ante oculos, Trasymenæque busta
Et Pauli stare ingentem miraberis umbram.

A thought somewhat of the same nature occurs in a French author: "Il se cache; mais sa réputation le découvre. Il marche sans suite et sans équipage; mais chacun, dans son esprit, le met sur un char de triomphe. On compte, en le voyant, les ennemis qu'il a vaincus, non pas les serviteurs qui le suivent. Tout seul qu'il est, on se figure, autour de lui, ses vertus, et ses victoires qui l'accompagnent. Moins il est superbe, plus il devient vénérable." Oraison funèbre de M. de Turenne, par M. Flechier.—Both these passages are splendid, rather than sublime. In the first, there is a want of justness in the thought; in the second, of simplicity in the expression.

with simplicity, is, either immediately or remotely, the fundamental quality of whatever is sublime ; but we have seen that amplitude is confined to one species of sublime objects ; and cannot, without violent straining, be applied to them all. The author of "a philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful," to whom we are indebted for several ingenious and original thoughts upon this subject, proposes a formal theory upon this foundation, that terror is the source of the sublime, and that no objects have this character, but such as produce impressions of pain and danger. It is indeed true, that many terrible objects are highly sublime ; and that grandeur does not refuse an alliance with the idea of danger. But though this is very properly illustrated by the author (many of whose sentiments on that head I have adopted), yet he seems to stretch his theory too far, when he represents the sublime as consisting wholly in modes of danger, or of pain. For the proper sensation of sublimity appears to be very distinguishable from the sensation of either of these ; and, on several occasions, to be entirely separated from them. In many grand objects, there is no coincidence with terror at all ; as in the magnificent prospect of wide-extended plains, and of the starry firmament ; or in the moral dispositions and sentiments, which we view with high admiration ; and in many painful and terrible objects, also, it is clear, there is no sort of grandeur. The amputation of a limb, or the bite of a snake, are exceedingly terrible ; but are destitute of all claim whatever to sublimity. I am inclined to think, that mighty force or power, whether accompanied with terror or not, whether employed in protecting or alarming us, has a better title, than any thing it has yet been mentioned, to be the fundamental quality of the sublime ; as, after the review which

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we have taken, there does not occur to me any sublime object, into the idea of which, power, strength, and force, either enter not directly, or are not, at least, intimately associated with the idea, by leading our thoughts to some astonishing power, as concerned in the production of the object. However, I do not insist upon this, as sufficient to found a general theory : it is enough to have given this view of the nature and different kinds of sublime objects : by which I hope to have laid a proper foundation for discussing, with greater accuracy, the sublime in writing and composition.

L E C T U R E IV.

THE SUBLIME IN WRITING.

HAVING treated of grandeur or sublimity in external objects, the way seems now to be cleared, for treating, with more advantage, of the description of such objects ; or, of what is called the sublime in writing. Though I may appear to enter early on the consideration of this subject ; yet, as the sublime is a species of writing which depends less than any other on the artificial embellishments of rhetoric, it may be examined with as much propriety here, as in any subsequent part of the lectures.

Many critical terms have unfortunately been employed, in a sense too loose and vague—none more so, than that of the sublime. Every one is acquainted with the character of Cesar's commentaries, and of the style in which they are written—a style, remarkably pure, simple, and elegant—but the most remote from the sublime, of any of the classical authors. Yet this author has a German critic, Johannes Gulielmus Bergerus, who wrote no longer ago than the year 1720, pitched upon as the perfect model of the sublime, and has composed a quarto volume, entitled, *De naturali pulchritudine Ora-*

tionis ; the express intention of which is to show, that Cæsar's commentaries contain the most complete exemplification of all Longinus's rules relating to sublime writing. This I mention as a strong proof of the confused ideas which have prevailed, concerning this subject. The true sense of sublime writing, undoubtedly, is such a description of objects, or exhibition of sentiments, which are in themselves of a sublime nature, as shall give us strong impressions of them. But there is another very indefinite, and therefore very improper sense, which has been too often put upon it ; when it is applied to signify any remarkable and distinguishing excellency of composition ; whether it raise in us the ideas of grandeur, or those of gentleness, elegance, or any other sort of beauty. In this sense, Cæsar's commentaries may, indeed, be termed sublime, and so may many sonnets, pastorals, and love elegies, as well as Homer's Iliad. But this evidently confounds the use of words ; and marks no one species, or character, of composition whatever.

I am sorry to be obliged to observe, that the sublime is too often used in this last and improper sense, by the celebrated critic Longinus, in his treatise on this subject. He sets out, indeed, with describing it in its just and proper meaning ; as something that elevates the mind above itself, and fills it with high conceptions, and a noble pride. But from this view of it he frequently departs ; and substitutes in the place of it, whatever, in any strain of composition, pleases highly. Thus, many of the passages which he produces, as instances of the sublime, are merely elegant, without having the most distant relation to proper sublimity ; witness Sappho's famous ode, on which he descants at considerable length. He points out five sources of the sublime. The first is, boldness or grandeur in the thoughts ; the second is, the pathetic ;

the third, the proper application of figures ; the fourth, the use of tropes and beautiful expressions ; the fifth, musical structure and arrangement of words. This is the plan of one who was writing a treatise of rhetoric, or of the beauties of writing in general ; not of the sublime in particular. For of these five heads, only the two first have any peculiar relation to the sublime ; boldness and grandeur in the thoughts, and, in some instances, the pathetic, or strong exertions of passion : the other three, tropes, figures, and musical arrangement, have no more relation to the sublime, than to other kinds of good writing ; perhaps less to the sublime than to any other species whatever ; because it requires less the assistance of ornament. From this it appears, that clear and precise ideas on this head, are not to be expected from that writer. I would not, however, be understood, as if I meant, by this censure, to represent his treatise as of small value. I know no critic, ancient or modern, that discovers a more lively relish of the beauties of fine writing, than Longinus ; and he has also the merit of being himself an excellent, and, in several passages, a truly sublime, writer. But, as his work has been generally considered as a standard on this subject, it was incumbent on me to give my opinion concerning the benefit to be derived from it. It deserves to be consulted, not so much for distinct instruction concerning the sublime, as for excellent general ideas concerning beauty in writing.

I return now to the proper and natural idea of the sublime in composition. The foundation of it must always be laid in the nature of the object described. Unless it be such an object, as, if presented to our eyes, if exhibited to us in reality, would raise ideas of that elevating, that awful, and magnificent kind, which we call sublime ; the description, however finely drawn, is not entitled to come under

this class. This excludes all objects that are merely beautiful, gay, or elegant. In the next place, the object must not only, in itself, be sublime, but it must be set before us in such a light, as is most proper to give us a clear and full impression of it ; it must be described with strength, with conciseness and simplicity. This depends, principally, upon the lively impression which the poet or orator has of the object which he exhibits ; and upon his being deeply affected, and warmed, by the sublime idea which he would convey. If his own feeling be languid, he can never inspire us with any strong emotion. Instances, which are extremely necessary on this subject, will clearly show the importance of all the requisites which I have just now mentioned.

It is, generally speaking, among the most ancient authors, that we are to look for the most striking instances of the sublime. I am inclined to think, that the early ages of the world, and the rude unimproved state of society, are peculiarly favourable to the strong emotions of sublimity. The genius of men is then much turned to admiration and astonishment. Meeting with many objects, to them new and strange, their imagination is kept glowing, and their passions are often raised to the utmost. They think and express themselves boldly, and without restraint. In the progress of society, the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy, than to strength or sublimity.

Of all writings, ancient or modern, the sacred scriptures afford us the highest instances of the sublime. The descriptions of the Deity, in them, are wonderfully noble ; both from the grandeur of the object, and the manner of representing it. What an assemblage, for instance, of awful and sublime ideas is presented to us, in that passage of the xviiith psalm, where an appearance of the Almighty is described ? “ In my distress, I called

“ upon the Lord ; he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him. Then, the earth shook and trembled ; the foundations also of the hills were moved ; because he was wroth. He bowed the heavens, and came down, and darkness was under his feet ; and he did ride upon a cherub ; and did fly ; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place ; his pavilion round about him were dark waters, and thick clouds of the sky.” Here, agreeably to the principles established in the last lecture, we see, with what propriety and success the circumstances of darkness and terror are applied for heightening the sublime. So, also, the prophet Habakkuk, in a similar passage : “ He stood and measured the earth ; he beheld, and drove asunder the nations. The everlasting mountains were scattered ; the perpetual hills did bow ; his ways are everlasting. The mountains saw thee ; and they trembled. The overflowing of the water passed by. The deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.”

The noted instance, given by Longinus, from Moses, “ God said, let there be light ; and there was light,” is not liable to the censure which I passed on some of his instances, of being foreign to the subject. It belongs to the true sublime ; and the sublimity of it, arises from the strong conception it gives, of an exertion of power, producing its effect with the utmost speed and facility. A thought of the same kind is magnificently amplified in the following passage of Isaiah *, “ Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb : I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself—that

* Chap. xxiv. 24, 27. 28.

“ faith to the deep, be dry, and I will dry up thy
 “ rivers ; that faith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd,
 “ and shall perform all my pleasure ; even saying
 “ to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built ; and to the
 “ temple, thy foundation shall be laid.” There is
 a passage in the psalms, which deserves to be men-
 tioned under this head ; “ God,” says the psalmist,
 “ stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their
 “ waves, and the tumults of the people.” The
 joining together two such grand objects, as the rag-
 ings of the waters, and the tumults of the people,
 between which there is so much resemblance as to
 form a very natural association in the fancy, and
 the representing them both as subject, at one mo-
 ment, to the command of God, produces a noble
 effect.

Homer is a poet, who, in all ages, and by all cri-
 tics, has been greatly admired for sublimity ; and
 he owes much of his grandeur to that native and
 unaffected simplicity which characterises his manner.
 His descriptions of hosts engaging—the animation,
 the fire, and rapidity, which he throws into his
 battles, present to every reader of the Iliad, fre-
 quent instances of sublime writing. His introduction
 of the gods, tends often to heighten, in a high de-
 gree, the majesty of his warlike scenes. Hence
 Longinus bestows such high and just commendations
 on that passage, in the fifteenth book of the
 Iliad, where Neptune, when preparing to issue forth
 into the engagement, is described as shaking the
 mountains with his steps, and driving his chariot
 along the ocean. Minerva, arming herself for fight
 in the fifth book ; and Apollo, in the fifteenth,
 leading on the Trojans, and flashing terror with his
 ægis on the face of the Greeks, are similar instances
 of great sublimity added to the description of bat-
 tles, by the appearances of those celestial beings. In
 the twentieth book, where all the gods take part in

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the engagement, according as they severally favour either the Grecians or the Trojans, the poet's genius is signally displayed, and the description rises into the most awful magnificence. All nature is represented as in commotion. Jupiter thunders in the heavens; Neptune strikes the earth with his trident; the ships, the city, and the mountains shake; the earth trembles to its centre; Pluto starts from his throne, in dread lest the secrets of the infernal region should be laid open to the view of mortals. The passage is worthy of being inserted.

Ἄνταρ ἔπει μὲν ὁμίλει Οὐλυμπιοὶ κλυθεὶν σάδον·
ὦρτο δ' Ἐρις κρατερῇ, λαοσσόος· αὐτὸς δ' Ἀθήνη, —
Ἄνε δ' Ἄρης ἰστέρωθε, ἱερὰντα λαίλαπι ἴσος, —
Ὅς τις ἀμφότερος μακάρες θεοὶ οὐρινόντες,
Συμβάλεω, σὺ δ' αὐτοῖς ἐρίδα ραγύνετε βαρυαῶν·
Δίονι δ' ἰβρίτῃσι πατέρ' ὦδον τε θίον τε
Ἐΐθε· αὐτὰρ σιρβὶ Ποσειδάων ἐτίναξ·
Γαῖαν ἀπύρισσι, ὅρσην τ' αἰπὴντα παρῆνα·
Πῶτας δ' ἐσσηύοντο πέδις πολυκίδαων Ἰδης,
Καὶ κορυφαί, Τρώην τε πόλιν, καὶ τὴν Ἀχαιῶν·
Ἐδδίσαν δ' ὑπερβῶν ἀπ' ἑσθλῶν, Αἰδωνεύς
Δίωσας δ' ἐκ θρόνῳ αἰγροῦ, καὶ ἰαχί· μὴ οἱ ὑπερβῶ
Γαῖαν παρρηξίει Ποσειδάων προσιχθῶν,
Οἰκίᾳ δὲ θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθάνατοῖσι φασίη
Σμαρδαλοῦ, οὐρανῶσα, τὰ τε συγχεῖσι θεοὶ παρ'
Τόσσος ἀρὰ πτυγὸς ὦρτο θίον ἐρίδι ξυιόντων *

Piæd, 20. 47.

* But when the powers descending swell'd the fight,
Then tumult rose, fierce rage, and pale affright;
Now through the trembling shores Minerva calls,
And now she thunders from the Grecian walls.
Mars hov'ring o'er his Troy, his terror shrouds
In gloomy tempests, and a night of clouds;
Now through each Trojan heart, he fury pours,
With voice divine, from Ilion's topmost towers——
Above, the ~~the~~ of Gods his thunder rolls,
And peals on peals redoubled rend the poles;
Beneath, stern Neptune shakes the solid ground,
The forests wave, the mountains nod around.
Through all her summits, tremble Ida's woods,
And from their sources boil her hundred floods.
Troy's turrets totter on the rocking plain,

The works of Ossian (as I have elsewhere shown) abound with examples of the sublime. The subjects of which that author treats, and the manner in which he writes, are particularly favourable to it. He possesses all the plain and venerable manner of the ancient times. He deals in no superfluous or gaudy ornaments; but throws forth his images with a rapid conciseness, which enables them to strike the mind with the greatest force. Among poets of more polished times, we are to look for the graces of correct writing, for just proportion of parts, and skilfully-conducted narration. In the midst of smiling scenery and pleasurable themes, the gay and the beautiful will appear, undoubtedly, to more advantage. But amidst the rude scenes of nature and of society, such as Ossian describes—amidst rocks, and torrents, and whirlwinds, and battles, dwells the sublime; and naturally associates itself with that great and solemn spirit, which distinguishes the author of Fingal. “As autumn’s dark storms pour
 “ from two echoing hills, so toward each other
 “ approached the heroes. As two dark streams
 “ from high rocks meet, and mix, and roar on the
 “ plain: loud, rough, and dark, in battle, met
 “ Lochlin and Inisfail; chief mixed his strokes
 “ with chief, and man with man. Steel clanging
 “ sounded on steel. Helmets are cleft on high;
 “ blood bursts, and smokes around. As the trou-
 “ bled noise of the ocean, when roll the waves on

And the toss’d navies beat the heaving main.
 Deep in the dismal region of the dead,
 Th’ infernal monarch rear’d his horrid head,
 Leapt from his throne, lest Neptune’s arm should lay
 His dark dominions open to the day;
 And pour in light on Pluto’s drear abodes,
 Abhor’d by men, and dreadful ev’n to Gods.
 Such wars th’ immortals wage; such horrors rend
 The world’s vast concave, when the Gods contend.

Pope.

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“ high ; as the last peal of the thunder of heaven ;
“ such is the noise of battle. The groan of the
“ people spread over the hills. It was like the
“ thunder of night, when the cloud bursts on
“ Cona, and a thousand ghosts shriek at once on
“ the hollow wind.” Never were images of more
awful sublimity employed to heighten the terror
of battle.

I have produced these instances, in order to demonstrate, that conciseness and simplicity are essential to sublime writing. Simplicity, I place in opposition to studied and profuse ornament ; and conciseness, to superfluous expression. The reason why a defect, either in conciseness or simplicity, is hurtful in a peculiar manner to the sublime, I shall endeavour to explain. The emotion occasioned in the mind by some great or noble object, raises it considerably above its ordinary pitch. A sort of enthusiasm is produced, extremely agreeable while it lasts ; but from which the mind is tending every moment to fall down into its ordinary situation. Now, when an author has brought us, or is attempting to bring us, into this state—if he multiplies words unnecessarily, if he decks the sublime object which he presents to us, round and round, with glittering ornaments—nay, if he throws in any one decoration that sinks in the least below the capital image, that moment he alters the key ; he relaxes the tension of the mind ; the strength of the feeling is emasculated ; the beautiful may remain, but the sublime is gone. When Julius Cæsar said to the pilot who was afraid to put to sea with him in a storm, “ Quid times ? Cæsarem vehis ;” we are struck with the daring magnanimity of one relying with such confidence on his cause and his fortune. These few words convey every thing necessary to give us the impression full. Lucan resolved to amplify and adorn the thought. Observe how,

every time he twists it round, it departs farther from the sublime, till it end at last in tumid declamation.

Sperne minas, inquit, pelagi, ventoque furenti
Trade sinum : Italiam, si, cœlo auctore, recusas,
Me, pete. Sola tibi causa hæc est justa timoris,
Victorem non nosse tuum ; quem numina nunquam
Destituunt ; de quo male tunc Fortuna meretur,
Cum post vota venit. Medias perrumpæ procellas
Tutela secure mea. Cœli isti fretique
Non puppis nostræ labor est. Hanc Cæsare pressam
A fluctu defendet onus ; nam proderit undis
Iste ratis :——Quid tanta strage paratur
Ignoras ? quærit pelagi cœlique tumultu
Quid præstet fortuna mihi*. PHARS. V. 578.

- * But Cæsar still superior to distress,
Fearless, and confident of sure success,
Thus to the pilot loud :—The seas despise,
And the vain threat'ning of the noisy skies ;
Though Gods deny thee yon Ausonian strand,
Yet go, I charge you, go at my command.
Thy ignorance alone can cause thy fears,
Thou know'st not what a freight thy vessel bears ;
Thou know'st not I am he, to whom 'tis given,
Never to want the care of watchful heaven.
Obedient fortune waits my humble thrall,
And, always ready, comes before I call.
Let winds, and seas, loud wars at freedom wage,
And waste upon themselves their empty rage,
A stronger, mightier Demon is thy friend,
Thou and thy bark on Cæsar's fate depend.
Thou stand'st amaz'd to view this dreadful scene,
And wonder'st what the Gods and fortune mean ;
But artfully their bounties thus they raise,
And from my danger arrogate new praise :
Amidst the fears of death they bid me live,
And still enhance what they are sure to give. ROWE.

On account of the great importance of simplicity and conciseness, I conceive rhyme, in English verse, to be, if not inconsistent with the sublime, at least very unfavourable to it. The constrained elegance of this kind of verse, and studied smoothness of the sounds, answering regularly to each other at the end of the line, though they be quite

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consistent with gentle emotions, yet weaken the native force of sublimity ; besides, that the superfluous words which the poet is often obliged to introduce, in order to fill up the rhyme, tend farther to enfeeble it. Homer's description of the nod of Jupiter, as shaking the heavens, has been admired in all ages, as highly sublime. Literally translated, it runs thus : " He spoke, and bending " his fable brows, gave the awful nod ; while he " shook the celestial locks of his immortal head, " all Olympus was shaken." Mr. Pope translates it thus :

He spoke ; and awful bends his fable brows,
Shakes his ambrosial curls, and gives the nod,
The stamp of fate, and sanction of a God.
High Heaven with trembling the dread signal took,
And all Olympus to its centre shook.

The image is spread out, and attempted to be beautified ; but it is, in truth, weakened. The third line—" The stamp of fate, and sanction of a God." is merely expletive ; and introduced for no other reason but to fill up the rhyme ; for it interrupts the description, and clogs the image. For the same reason, out of mere compliance with the rhyme, Jupiter is represented as shaking his locks before he gives the nod ;—" Shakes his ambrosial curls, " and gives the nod," which is trifling, and without meaning. Whereas, in the original, the hair of his head shaken, is the effect of his nod, and makes a happy picturesque circumstance in the description*.

The boldness, freedom, and variety of our blank verse, is infinitely more favourable than rhyme, to all kinds of sublime poetry. The fullest proof of this is afforded by Milton ; an author whose genius led him eminently to the sublime. The whole first and second books of *Paradise Lost*, are con-

* See Webb on the beauties of poetry.

tinued instances of it. Take only, for an example, the following noted description of Satan, after his fall, appearing at the head of the infernal hosts :

———He, above the rest,
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower : his form had not yet lost
All its original brightness, nor appeared
Less than archangel ruined ; and the excess
Of glory obscured : as when the sun, new risen,
Looks through the horizontal misty air,
Shorn of his beams ; or, from behind, the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs. Darken'd so, yet shone
Above them all th' archangel.———

Here concur a variety of sources of the sublime : the principal object eminently great ; a high superior nature, fallen indeed, but erecting itself against distress ; the grandeur of the principal object heightened, by associating it with so noble an idea as that of the sun suffering an eclipse ; this picture shaded with all those images of change and trouble, of darkness and terror, which coincide so finely with the sublime emotion ; and the whole expressed in a style and versification, easy, natural, and simple, but magnificent.

I have spoken of simplicity and conciseness as essential to sublime writing. In my general description of it, I mentioned strength, as another necessary requisite. The strength of description arises, in a great measure, from a simple conciseness ; but, it supposes also something more ; namely, a proper choice of circumstances in the description, so as to exhibit the object in its full and most striking point of view. For every object has several faces, so to speak, by which it may be presented to us, according to the circumstances with which we surround it ; and it will appear

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eminently sublime, or not, in proportion as all these circumstances are happily chosen, and of a sublime kind. Here lies the great art of the writer, and indeed, the great difficulty of sublime description. If the description be too general, and divested of circumstances, the object appears in a faint light ; it makes a feeble impression, or no impression at all, on the reader. At the same time, if any trivial or improper circumstances are mingled, the whole is degraded.

A storm or tempest, for instance, is a sublime object in nature. But, to render it sublime in description, it is not enough, either to give us mere general expressions, concerning the violence of the tempest, or to describe its common, vulgar effects, in overthrowing trees and houses. It must be painted with such circumstances as fill the mind with great and awful ideas. This is very happily done by Virgil, in the following passage :

*Ipse, Pater, media nimborum in nocte, corusco
Fulmina molitur dextra, quo maxima motu
Terra tremit ; fugere ferae ; et mortalia corda,
Per gentes, humilis stravit pavor ; Ille, flagranti
Ant Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia celo
Dejicit*.*——

GEORG. I.

Every circumstance in this noble description is the production of an imagination heated and af-

- * The father of the Gods his glory shrouds,
Involv'd in tempests, and a night of clouds :
And from the middle darkness flashing out,
By fits he deals his fiery bolts about.
Earth feels the motions of her angry God, }
Her entrails tremble, and her mountains nod, }
And flying beasts in forests seek abode.
Deep horror seizes every human breast ;
Their pride is humbled, and their fears confess ;
While he, from high, his rolling thunders throws,
And fires the mountains with repeated blows ;
The rocks are from their old foundations rent ;
The winds redouble, and the rains augment, DRYDEN.

tonished with the grandeur of the object. If there be any defect, it is in the words immediately following those I have quoted; "*Ingeminant Austri, et densissimus imber;*" where the transition is made too hastily, I am afraid, from the preceding sublime images, to a thick shower, and the blowing of the south wind; and shows how difficult it frequently is, to descend with grace, without seeming to fall.

The high importance of the rule which I have been now giving, concerning the proper choice of circumstances, when description is meant to be sublime, seems to me not to have been sufficiently attended to. It has, however, such a foundation in nature, as renders the least deflexion from it fatal. When a writer is aiming at the beautiful only, his descriptions may have improprieties in them, and yet be beautiful still. Some trivial, or misjudged circumstances can be overlooked by the reader; they make only the difference of more or less; the gay, or pleasing emotion, which he has raised, subsists still. But the case is quite different with the sublime. There, one trifling circumstance, one mean idea, is sufficient to destroy the whole charm. This is owing to the nature of the emotion aimed at by sublime description, which admits of no mediocrity, and cannot subsist in a middle state; but must either highly transport us, or, if unsuccessful in the execution, leave us greatly disgusted, and displeased. We attempt to rise along with the writer; the imagination is awakened, and put upon the stretch; but it requires to be supported; and if, in the midst of its efforts, you desert it unexpectedly, down it comes, with a painful shock. When Milton, in his battle of the angels, describes them as tearing up the mountains, and throwing them at one another; there are, in his description,

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as mr. Addison has observed, no circumstances but what are properly sublime :

From their foundations loos'ning to and fro,
They plucked the seated hills, with all their load,
Rocks, waters, woods ; and by the shaggy tops
Uplifting, bore them in their hands.——

Whereas Claudian, in a fragment upon the wars of the giants, has contrived to render this idea of their throwing the mountains, which is in itself so grand, burlesque and ridiculous, by this single circumstance, of one of his giants with the mountain *Ida* upon his shoulders, and a river, which flowed from the mountain, running down along the giant's back, as he held it up in that posture. There is a description too in Virgil, which, I think, is censurable, though more slightly, in this respect. It is that of the burning mountain *Ætna* ; a subject certainly very proper to be worked up by a poet into a sublime description :

———*Horrificis juxta tenat Ætna ruinis.
Interdumque atram prorumpit ad æthera nubem,
Turbine fumantem piceo, & candente favilla ;
Attollitque globos flammarum, & sidera lambit.
Interdum scopulos, avulsæque viscera montis
Erigit eructans liquefactaque saxa sub auras
Cum gemitu glomerat, fundoque exæstuat imo*.*

ÆN. III. 57r.

* The port capacious, and secure from wind,
Is to the foot of thundering *Ætna* join'd :
By turns a pitchy cloud she rolls on high,
By turns hot embers from her entrails fly,
And flakes of mounting flames that lick the sky.
Oft from her bowels massy rocks are thrown.
And shivered by the force, come piecemeal down.
Oft liquid lakes of burning sulphur flow,

Fed from the fiery springs that boil below. DRYDEN.

In this translation of Dryden's, the debasing circumstance, to which I object in the original, is, with propriety, omitted.

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Here, after several magnificent images, the poet concludes with personifying the mountain under this figure, "*eructans viscera cum gemitu*," belching up its bowels with a groan ; which, by likening the mountain to a sick, or drunk person, degrades the majesty of the description. It is to no purpose to tell us, that the poet here alludes to the fable of the giant Enceladus lying under mount *Ætna* ; and that he supposes his motions and tossings to have occasioned the fiery eruptions. He intended the description of a sublime object ; and the natural ideas, raised by a burning mountain, are infinitely more lofty, than the belchings of any giant, how huge soever. The debasing effect of the idea which is here presented, will appear in a stronger light, by seeing what figure it makes in a poem of sir Richard Blackmore's, who, through a monstrous perversity of taste, had chosen this for the capital circumstance in his description, and thereby (as dr. Arbuthnot humorously observes, in his treatise on the art of sinking) had represented the mountain as in a fit of the cholic.

*Ætna, and all the burning mountains find
Their kindled stores with inbred storms of wind
Blown up to rage, and roaring out complain,
As torn with inward gripes and torturing pain ;
Labouring, they cast their dreadful vomit round,
And with their melted bowels spread the ground.*

Such instances show how much the sublime depends upon a just selection of circumstances ; and with how great care every circumstance must be avoided, which, by bordering in the least upon the mean, or even upon the gay or the trifling, alters the tone of the emotion.

If it shall now be enquired, what are the proper sources of the sublime ? My answer is, that they

are to be looked for every where in nature. It is not by hunting after tropes, and figures, and rhetorical assistances, that we can expect to produce it. No : it stands clear, for the most part, of these laboured refinements of art. It must come unsought, if it come at all ; and be the natural offspring of a strong imagination.

Eft Deus in nobis ; agitante calescimus illo.

Wherever a great and awful object is presented in nature, or a very magnanimous and exalted affection of the human mind is displayed ; thence, if you can catch the impressiion strongly, and exhibit it warm and glowing, you may draw the sublime. These are its only proper sources. In judging of any striking beauty in composition, whether it is, or is not, to be referred to this class, we must attend to the nature of the emotion which it raises ; and only, if it be of that elevating, solemn, and awful kind, which distinguishes this feeling, we can pronounce it sublime.

From the account which I have given of the nature of the sublime, it clearly follows, that it is an emotion which can never be long protracted. The mind, by no force of genius, can be kept, for any considerable time, so far raised above its common tone ; but will, of course, relax into its ordinary situation. Neither are the abilities of any human writer sufficient to furnish a long continuation of uninterrupted sublime ideas. The utmost we can expect is, that this fire of imagination should sometimes flash upon us like lightning from heaven, and then disappear. In Homer and Milton, this effulgence of genius breaks forth more frequently, and with greater lustre than in most authors. Shakespeare also rises often into the true sublime. But no author whatever is sublime throughout. Some, indeed, there are, who, by

a strength and dignity in their conceptions, and a current of high ideas that runs through their whole composition, preserve the reader's mind always in a tone nearly allied to the sublime ; for which reason they may, in a limited sense, merit the name of continued sublime writers ; and, in this class, we may justly place Demosthenes and Plato.

As for what is called the sublime style, it is, for the most part, a very bad one ; and has no relation whatever to the real sublime. Persons are apt to imagine, that magnificent words, accumulated epithets, and a certain swelling kind of expression, by rising above what is usual or vulgar, contributes to, or even forms the sublime. Nothing can be more false. In all the instances of sublime writing, which I have given, nothing of this kind appears. " God said, let there be light, and " there was light." This is striking and sublime. But put it into what is commonly called the sublime style : " The Sovereign Arbiter of nature, " by the potent energy of a single word, commanded the light to exist ;" and, as Boileau has well observed, the style indeed is raised, but the thought is fallen. In general, in all good writing, the sublime lies in the thought, not in the words ; and when the thought is truly noble, it will, for the most part, clothe itself in a native dignity of language. The sublime, indeed, rejects mean, low, or trivial expressions ; but it is equally an enemy to such as are turgid. The main secret of being sublime, is to say great things in few and plain words. It will be found to hold, without exception, that the most sublime authors are the simplest in their style ; and wherever you find a writer, who affects a more than ordinary pomp and parade of words, and is always endeavouring to magnify his subject by epithets, there you may immediately suspect,

that, feeble in sentiment, he is studying to support himself by mere expression.

The same unfavourable judgment we must pass, on all that laboured apparatus with which some writers introduce a passage, or description, which they intend shall be sublime ; calling on their readers to attend, invoking their muse, or breaking forth into general unmeaning exclamations, concerning the greatness, terribleness, or majesty of the object, which they are to describe. Mr. Addison, in his Campaign, has fallen into an error of this kind, when about to describe the battle of Blenheim.

But O ! my muse ! what numbers wilt thou find
To sing the furious troops in battle join'd ?
Methinks, I hear the drum's tumultuous sound,
The victor's shouts, and dying groans, confound, &c.

Introductions of this kind, are a forced attempt in a writer, to spur up himself, and his reader, when he finds his imagination begin to flag. It is like taking artificial spirits, in order to supply the want of such as are natural. By this observation, however, I do not mean to pass a general censure on Mr. Addison's Campaign, which, in several places, is far from wanting merit ; and, in particular, the noted comparison of his hero to the angel who rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm, is a truly sublime image.

The faults opposite to the sublime are chiefly two ; the frigid, and the bombast. The frigid consists, in degrading an object, or sentiment, which is sublime in itself, by our mean conception of it ; or by our weak, low, and childish description of it. his betrays entire absence, or at least great poverty of genius. Of this, there are abundance of examples, and these commented upon with much humour, in the treatise on the art of sinking, in dean Swift's works ; the instances taken chiefly from

for Richard Blackmore. One of these, I had occasion already to give, in relation to mount *Ætna*, and it were needless to produce any more. The bombast lies, in forcing an ordinary or trivial object out of its rank, and endeavouring to raise it into the sublime; or, in attempting to exalt a sublime object beyond all natural and reasonable bounds. Into this error, which is but too common, writers of genius may sometimes fall, by unluckily losing sight of the true point of the sublime. This is also called *fustian*, or *rant*. Shakespeare, a great, but incorrect genius, is not unexceptionable here. Dryden and Lee, in their tragedies, abound with it.

Thus far of the sublime; of which I have treated fully, because it is so capital an excellency in fine writing, and because clear and precise ideas on this head are, as far as I know, not to be met with in critical writers.

Before I conclude this lecture, there is one observation which I choose to make at this time; I shall make it once for all, and hope it will be afterwards remembered. It is with respect to the instances of faults, or rather blemishes and imperfections, which, as I have done in this lecture, I shall hereafter continue to take, when I can, from writers of reputation. I have not the least intention thereby to disparage their character in the general. I shall have other occasions of doing equal justice to their beauties. But it is no reflexion on any human performance, that it is not absolutely perfect. The task would be much easier for me, to collect instances of faults from bad writers. But they would draw no attention, when quoted from books which nobody reads. And I conceive, that the method which I follow, will contribute more to make the best authors be read with pleasure, when one properly distinguishes their beauties from their faults; and is led to imitate and admire only what is worthy of imitation and admiration.

LECTURE V.

BEAUTY AND OTHER PLEASURES OF TASTE.

AS sublimity constitutes a particular character of composition, and forms one of the highest excellencies of eloquence and of poetry, it was proper to treat of it at some length. It will not be necessary to discuss so particularly all the other pleasures that arise from taste, as some of them have less relation to our main subject. On beauty only I shall make several observations, both as the subject is curious, and as it tends to improve taste, and to discover the foundation of several of the graces of description and of poetry*.

Beauty, next to sublimity, affords, beyond doubt, the highest pleasure to the imagination. The emotion which it raises, is very distinguishable from that of sublimity. It is of a calmer kind; more gentle and soothing; does not elevate the mind so much, but produces an agreeable serenity. Sublimity raises a feeling, too violent, as I showed,

* See Hutchinson's enquiry concerning beauty and virtue—
ward on taste, chap. iii.—Enquiry into the origin of our
as of the sublime and beautiful—Elements of criticism,
). iii.—Spectator, vol. vi.—Essay on the pleasures of taste.

to be lasting ; the pleasure arising from beauty admits of longer continuance. It extends also to a much greater variety of objects than sublimity ; to a variety indeed so great, that the feelings which beautiful objects produce, differ considerably, not in degree only, but also in kind, from one another. Hence, no word in the language is used in a more vague signification than beauty. It is applied to almost every external object that pleases the eye, or the ear ; to a great number of the graces of writing ; to many dispositions of the mind ; nay, to several objects of mere abstract science. We talk currently of a beautiful tree or flower ; a beautiful poem ; a beautiful character ; and a beautiful theorem in mathematics.

Hence we may easily perceive, that, among so great a variety of objects, to find out some one quality in which they all agree, and which is the foundation of that agreeable sensation they all raise, must be a very difficult, if not, more probably, a vain attempt. Objects, denominated beautiful, are so different, as to please, not in virtue of any one quality common to them all, but by means of several different principles in human nature. The agreeable emotion which they all raise, is somewhat of the same nature ; and, therefore, has the common name of beauty given to it ; but it is raised by different causes.

Hypotheses, however, have been framed by ingenious men, for assigning the fundamental quality of beauty in all objects. In particular, uniformity amidst variety, has been insisted on as this fundamental quality. For the beauty of many figures, I admit that this accounts in a satisfactory manner. But when we endeavour to apply this principle to beautiful objects of some other kind, as to colour, for instance, or motion, we shall soon find that it has no place. And even in exter-

nal figured objects, it does not hold, that their beauty is in proportion to their mixture of variety with uniformity ; seeing many please us, as highly beautiful, which have almost no variety at all ; and others, which are various to a degree of intricacy. Laying systems of this kind, therefore, aside, what I now propose is, to give an enumeration of several of those classes of objects in which beauty most remarkably appears ; and to point out, as far as I can, the separate principles of beauty in each of them.

Colour affords, perhaps, the simplest instance of beauty, and therefore the fittest to begin with. Here, neither variety, nor uniformity, nor any other principle, that I know, can be assigned, as the foundation of beauty. We can refer it to no other cause but the structure of the eye, which determines us to receive certain modifications of the rays of light with more pleasure than others. And we see, accordingly, that, as the organ of sensation varies in different persons, they have their different favourite colours. It is probable, that association of ideas has influence, in some cases, on the pleasure which we receive from colours. Green, for instance, may appear more beautiful, by being connected in our ideas with rural prospects and scenes ; white, with innocence ; blue, with the serenity of the sky. Independent of associations of this kind, all that we can farther observe, concerning colours, is, that those chosen for beauty are, generally, delicate, rather than glaring. Such are those paintings with which nature hath ornamented some of her works, and which art strives vain to imitate ; as the feathers of several kinds of birds, the leaves of flowers, and the fine variation of colours exhibited by the sky at the rising and setting of the sun. These present to us the highest instances of the beauty of colouring ; and have

accordingly been the favourite subjects of poetical description in all countries.

From colour we proceed to figure, which opens to us forms of beauty more complex and diversified. Regularity first occurs to be noticed as a source of beauty. By a regular figure, is meant, one which we perceive to be formed according to some certain rule, and not left arbitrary, or loose, in the construction of its parts. Thus, a circle, a square, a triangle, or a hexagon, please the eye, by their regularity, as beautiful figures. We must not, however, conclude, that all figures please in proportion to their regularity; or that regularity is the sole, or the chief, foundation of beauty in figure. On the contrary, a certain graceful variety is found to be a much more powerful principle of beauty; and is therefore studied a great deal more than regularity, in all works that are designed merely to please the eye. I am, indeed, inclined to think, that regularity appears beautiful to us, chiefly, if not only, on account of its suggesting the ideas of fitness, propriety, and use, which have always a greater connexion with orderly and proportioned forms, than with those which appear not constructed according to any certain rule. It is clear, that nature, who is undoubtedly the most graceful artist, hath, in all her ornamental works, pursued variety, with an apparent neglect of regularity. Cabinets, doors, and windows, are made after a regular form, in cubes and parallelograms, with exact proportion of parts; and by being so formed, they please the eye; for this good reason, that, being works of use, they are, by such figures, the better suited to the ends for which they were designed. But plants, flowers, and leaves are full of variety and diversity. A straight canal is an insipid figure, in comparison of the meanders of rivers. Cones and pyramids are beautiful;

but trees growing in their natural wildness, are infinitely more beautiful than when trimmed into pyramids and cones. The apartments of a house must be regular in their disposition, for the conveniency of its inhabitants; but a garden, which is designed merely for beauty, would be exceedingly disgusting, if it had as much uniformity and order in its parts as a dwelling house.

Mr. Hogarth, in his Analysis of beauty, has observed, that figures, bounded by curve lines, are, in general, more beautiful than those bounded by straight lines and angles. He pitches upon two lines, on which, according to him, the beauty of figure principally depends; and he has illustrated and supported his doctrine, by a surprising number of instances. The one is the waving line, or a curve bending backwards and forwards, somewhat in the form of the letter S. This he calls the line of beauty; and shows how often it is found in shells, flowers, and such other ornamental works of nature; as is common also in the figures designed by painters and sculptors, for the purpose of decoration. The other line, which he calls the line of grace, is the former waving curve, twilted round some solid body. The curling worm of a common jack is one of the instances he gives of it. Twisted pillars, and twisted horns, also exhibit it. In all the instances which he mentions, variety plainly appears to be so material a principle of beauty, that he seems not to err much, when he defines the art of drawing pleasing forms, to be the art of varying well. For the curve line, so much the favourite of painters, derives, according to him, its chief advantage, from its perpetual bending and variation from the stiff regularity of the straight line.

Motion furnishes another source of beauty, distinct from figure. Motion of itself is pleasing; and bodies in motion are, "*ceteris paribus*," preferred

to those in rest. It is, however, only gentle motion that belongs to the beautiful ; for when it is very swift, or very forcible, such as that of a torrent, it partakes of the sublime. The motion of a bird gliding through the air, is extremely beautiful : the swiftness with which lightning darts through the heavens, is magnificent and astonishing. And here, it is proper to observe, that the sensations of sublime and beautiful are not always distinguished by very distant boundaries ; but are capable, in several instances, of approaching towards each other. Thus, a smooth, running stream is one of the most beautiful objects in nature : as it swells gradually into a great river, the beautiful, by degrees, is lost in the sublime. A young tree is a beautiful object ; a spreading, ancient oak is a venerable and a grand one. The calmness of a fine morning is beautiful ; the universal stillness of the evening is highly sublime. But to return to the beauty of motion, it will be found, I think, to hold very generally, that motion in a straight line is not so beautiful as in an undulating, waving direction ; and motion upwards is, commonly, too, more agreeable than motion downwards. The easy curling motion of flame and smoke may be instanced, as an object singularly agreeable : and here mr. Hogarth's waving line recurs upon us as a principle of beauty. That artist observes very ingeniously, that all the common and necessary motions for the business of life, are performed by men in straight or plain lines : but that all the graceful and ornamental movements are made in waving lines ; an observation not unworthy of being attended to, by all who study the grace of gesture and action.

Though colour, figure, and motion, be separate principles of beauty ; yet in many beautiful objects, they all meet, and thereby render the beauty both greater, and more complex. Thus, in flowers,

trees, animals, we are entertained at once with the delicacy of the colour, with the gracefulness of the figure, and sometimes also with the motion of the object. Although each of these produce a separate agreeable sensation, yet they are of such a similar nature, as readily to mix and blend in one general perception of beauty, which we ascribe to the whole object as its cause: for beauty is always conceived by us, as something residing in the object which raises the pleasant sensation; a sort of glory which dwells upon, and invests it. Perhaps the most complete assemblage of beautiful objects that can any where be found, is presented by a rich natural landscape, where there is a sufficient variety of objects: fields in verdure, scattered trees and flowers, running water, and animals grazing. If to these be joined, some of the productions of art, which suit such a scene—as a bridge with arches over a river, smoke rising from cottages, in the midst of trees, and the distant view of a fine building seen by the rising sun—we then enjoy, in the highest perfection, that gay, cheerful, and placid sensation which characterises beauty. To have an eye and a taste formed for catching the peculiar beauties of such scenes as these, is a necessary requisite for all who attempt poetical description.

The beauty of the human countenance is more complex than any that we have yet considered. It includes the beauty of colour, arising from the delicate shades of the complexion; and the beauty of figure, arising from the lines which form the different features of the face. But the chief beauty of the countenance depends upon a mysterious expression, which it conveys, of the qualities of the mind; of good sense, or good humour; of sprightliness, candour, benevolence, sensibility, or other amiable dispositions. How it comes to pass, that a certain conformation of features is connected in our

idea with certain moral qualities ; whether we are taught by instinct, or by experience, to form this connexion, and to read the mind in the countenance ; belongs not to us now to enquire, nor is indeed easy to resolve. The fact is certain, and acknowledged, that what gives the human countenance its most distinguishing beauty, is what is called its expression ; or an image, which it is conceived to show, of internal moral dispositions.

This leads us to observe, that there are certain qualities of the mind, which, whether expressed in the countenance, or by words, or by actions, always raise in us a feeling similar to that of beauty. There are two great classes of moral qualities ; one is of the high and the great virtues, which require extraordinary efforts ; and turn upon dangers and sufferings ; as heroism, magnanimity, contempt of pleasures, and contempt of death. These, as I have observed in a former lecture, excite in the spectator an emotion of sublimity and grandeur. The other class is generally of the social virtues, and such as are of a softer and gentler kind ; as compassion, mildness, friendship, and generosity. These raise in the beholder a sensation of pleasure, so much akin to that produced by beautiful external objects, that, though of a more dignified nature, it may, without impropriety, be classed under the same head.

A species of beauty, distinct from any I have yet mentioned, arises from design or art ; or, in other words, from the perception of means being adapted to an end ; or the parts of any thing being well fitted to answer the design of the whole. When, in considering the structure of a tree or a plant, we observe, how all the parts, the roots, the stem, the bark, and the leaves, are suited to the growth and nutriment of the whole—much more when we survey all the parts and members of a living animal—or when we examine any of

the curious works of art, such as a clock, a ship, or any nice machine—the pleasure which we have in the survey, is wholly founded on this sense of beauty. It is altogether different from the perception of beauty, produced by colour, figure, variety, or any of the causes formerly mentioned. When I look at a watch, for instance, the case of it, if finely engraved, and of curious workmanship, strikes me as beautiful in the former sense; bright colour, exquisite polish, figures finely raised and turned. But when I examine the spring and the wheels, and praise the beauty of the internal machinery; my pleasure then arises wholly from the view of that admirable art, with which so many various and complicated parts are made to unite for one purpose.

This sense of beauty, in fitness and design, has an extensive influence over many of our ideas. It is the foundation of the beauty which we discover in the proportion of doors, windows, arches, pillars, and all the orders of architecture. Let the ornaments of a building be ever so fine and elegant in themselves, yet if they interfere with this sense of fitness and design, they lose their beauty, and hurt the eye, like disagreeable objects. Twisted columns, for instance, are undoubtedly ornamental; but as they have an appearance of weakness, they always displease when they are made use of to support any part of a building that is massive, and that seems to require a more substantial prop. We cannot look upon any work whatever, without being led, by a natural association of ideas, to think of its end and design, and of course to examine the propriety of its parts, in relation to its design and end. When their propriety is clearly discerned, the work seems always to have some beauty; but when there is a total want of propriety, it never fails of appearing deformed. Our

sense of fitness and design, therefore, is so powerful, and holds so high a rank among our perceptions, as to regulate, in a great measure, our other ideas of beauty : an observation which I the rather make, as it is of the utmost importance ; that all who study composition should carefully attend to it. For, in an epic poem, a history, an oration, or any work of genius, we always require, as we do in other works, a fitness, or adjustment of means, to the end which the author is supposed to have in view. Let his descriptions be ever so rich, or his figures ever so elegant, yet, if they are out of place, if they are not proper parts of that whole, if they suit not the main design, they lose all their beauty ; nay, from beauties they are converted into deformities. Such power has our sense of fitness and congruity, to produce a total transformation of an object whose appearance otherwise would have been beautiful.

After having mentioned so many various species of beauty, it now only remains to take notice of beauty as it is applied to writing or discourse ; a term commonly used in a sense altogether loose and undetermined. For it is applied to all that pleases, either in style or in sentiment, from whatever principle that pleasure flows ; and a beautiful poem or oration means, in common language, no other than a good one, or one well composed. In this sense, it is plain, the word is altogether indefinite, and points at no particular species or kind of beauty. There is, however, another sense, somewhat more definite, in which beauty of writing characterises a particular manner ; when it is used to signify a certain grace and amenity in the turn either of style or sentiment, for which some authors have been peculiarly distinguished. In this sense, it denotes a manner neither remarkably sublime, nor vehemently passionate, nor uncommonly

sparkling ; but such as raises in the reader an emotion of the gentle placid kind, similar to what is raised by the contemplation of beautiful objects in nature ; which neither lifts the mind very high, nor agitates it very much, but diffuses over the imagination an agreeable and pleasing serenity. Mr. Addison is a writer altogether of this character ; and is one of the most proper and precise examples that can be given of it. Fenelon, the author of the adventures of Telemachus, may be given as another example. Virgil, too, though very capable of rising on occasions into the sublime, yet, in his general manner, is distinguished by the character of beauty and grace, rather than of sublimity. Among orators, Cicero has more of the beautiful than Demosthenes, whose genius led him wholly towards vehemence and strength.

This much it is sufficient to have said upon the subject of beauty. We have traced it through a variety of forms ; as, next to sublimity, it is the most copious source of the pleasures of taste ; and as the consideration of the different appearances, and principles of beauty, tend to the improvement of taste in many subjects.

But it is not only by appearing under the forms of sublime or beautiful, that objects delight the imagination. From several other principles, also, they derive their power of giving it pleasure.

Novelty, for instance, has been mentioned by Mr. Addison, and by every writer on this subject. An object, which has no merit to recommend it, except its being uncommon or new, by means of this quality alone, produces in the mind a vivid and an agreeable emotion. Hence that passion of curiosity, which prevails so generally among mankind. Objects and ideas which have been long familiar, make too faint an impression, to give an agreeable exercise to our faculties. New and strange

objects rouse the mind from its dormant state, by giving it a quick and pleasing impulse. Hence, in a great measure, the entertainment afforded us by fiction and romance. The emotion raised by novelty is of a more lively and pungent nature, than that produced by beauty ; but much shorter in its continuance. For if the object have in itself no charms to hold our attention, the shining gloss thrown upon it by novelty, soon wears off.

Besides novelty, imitation is another source of pleasure to taste. This gives rise to what Mr. Addison terms, the secondary pleasures of imagination, which form, doubtless, a very extensive class. For all imitation affords some pleasure ; not only the imitation of beautiful or great objects, by recalling the original ideas of beauty or grandeur which such objects themselves exhibited ; but even objects which have neither beauty nor grandeur, nay, some which are terrible or deformed, please us in a secondary or represented view.

The pleasures of melody and harmony belong also to taste. There is no agreeable sensation we receive, either from beauty or sublimity, but what is capable of being heightened by the power of musical sound. Hence the delight of poetical numbers ; and even of the more concealed and looser measures of prose. Wit, humour, and ridicule likewise open a variety of pleasures to taste, quite distinct from any that we have yet considered.

At present, it is not necessary to pursue any farther the subject of the pleasures of taste. I have opened some of the general principles ; it is time now to make the application to our chief subject. If the question be put, to what class of those pleasures of taste which I have enumerated, that pleasure is to be referred, which we receive from poetry, eloquence, or fine writing ? My answer is, not to any one, but to them all. This singular advan-

age, writing and discourse possess, that they encompass so large and rich a field on all sides, and have power to exhibit, in great perfection, not a single set of objects only, but almost the whole of those which give pleasure to taste and imagination; whether that pleasure arise from sublimity, from beauty in its different forms, from design and art, from moral sentiment, from novelty, from harmony, from wit, humour, and ridicule. To whichever of these the peculiar bent of a person's taste lies, from some writer or other, he has it always in his power to receive the gratification of it.

Now this high power, which eloquence and poetry possess, of supplying taste and imagination with such a wide circle of pleasures, they derive altogether from their having a greater capacity of imitation and description than is possessed by any other art. Of all the means which human ingenuity has contrived, for recalling the images of real objects, and awakening, by representation, similar emotions to those which are raised by the original, none is so full and extensive, as that which is executed by words and writing. Through the assistance of this happy invention, there is nothing, either in the natural or moral world, but what can be represented and set before the mind, in colours very strong and lively. Hence it is usual among critical writers, to speak of discourse as the chief of all the imitative or mimetic arts; they compare it with painting and with sculpture, and in many respects prefer it justly before them.

This style was first introduced by Aristotle in his poetics; and since his time, has acquired a general currency among modern authors. But, as it is of consequence to introduce as much precision as possible into critical language, I must observe,

that this manner of speaking is not accurate. Neither discourse in general, nor poetry in particular, can be called altogether imitative arts. We must distinguish betwixt imitation and description, which are ideas that should not be confounded. Imitation is performed by means of somewhat that has a natural likeness and resemblance to the thing imitated, and of consequence is understood by all ; such are statues and pictures. Description, again, is the raising in the mind the conception of an object by means of some arbitrary or instituted symbols, understood only by those who agree in the institution of them ; such are words and writing. Words have no natural resemblance to the ideas or objects which they are employed to signify ; but a statue or a picture has a natural likeness to the original. And therefore imitation and description differ considerably in their nature from each other.

As far, indeed, as a poet introduces into his work persons actually speaking—and, by the words which he puts into their mouths, represents the discourse which they might be supposed to hold ; so far his art may more accurately be called imitative : and this is the case in all dramatic composition. But in narrative or descriptive works, it can with no propriety be called so. Who, for instance, would call Virgil's description of a tempest, in the first *Æneid*, an imitation of a storm? If we heard of the imitation of a battle, we might naturally think of some mock fight, or representation of a battle on the stage ; but would never apprehend, that it meant one of Homer's descriptions in the *Iliad*. I admit, at the same time, that imitation and description agree in their principal effect, of recalling by external signs, the ideas of things which we do not see. But though in this they coincide, yet it should not be forgotten, that the terms themselves are

not synonymous ; that they import different means of effecting the same end ; and of course make different impressions on the mind*.

Whether we consider poetry in particular, and discourse in general, as imitative or descriptive ; it is evident, that their whole power in recalling the impressions of real objects, is derived from the significancy of words. As their excellency flows altogether from this source, we must, in order to

* Though, in the execution of particular parts, poetry is certainly descriptive, rather than imitative, yet there is a qualified sense, in which poetry, in the general, may be termed an imitative art. The subject of the poet (as dr. Gerard has shown in the appendix to his essay on taste) is intended to be an imitation, not of things really existing, but of the course of nature ; that is, a feigned representation of such events, or such scenes, as, though they never had a being, yet might have existed ; and which, therefore, by their probability, bear a resemblance to nature. It was probably, in this sense, that Aristotle termed poetry a mimetic art. How far either the imitation or the description which poetry employs, is superior to the imitative powers of painting and music, is well shown by mr. Harris, in his treatise on music, painting, and poetry. The chief advantage which poetry, or discourse in general, enjoys, is that whereas, by the nature of his art, the painter is confined to the representation of a single moment, writing and discourse can trace a transaction through its whole progress. That moment, indeed, which the painter pitches upon for the subject of his picture, he may be said to exhibit with more advantage than the poet or the orator ; inasmuch as he sets before us, in one view, all the minute concurrent circumstances of the event which happen in one individual point of time, as they appear in nature ; while discourse is obliged to exhibit them in succession, and by means of a detail, which is in danger of becoming tedious, in order to be clear ; or if not tedious, is in danger of being obscure. But to that point of time which he has chosen, the painter being entirely confined, he cannot exhibit various stages of the same action or event ; he is subject to this farther defect, that he can only exhibit objects as they appear to the eye, and can very imperfectly inate characters and sentiments, which are the noblest objects of imitation or description. The power of representing these with full advantage, gives a high superiority to discourse and writing above all other imitative arts.

make way for further enquiries, begin at this fountain head. I shall, therefore, in the next lecture, enter upon the consideration of language : of the origin, the progress, and construction of which, I purpose to treat at some length.

LECTURE VI.

RISE AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE.

HAVING finished my observations on the pleasures of taste, which were meant to be introductory to the principal subject of these lectures, I now begin to treat of language; which is the foundation of the whole power of eloquence. This will lead to a considerable discussion; and there are few subjects belonging to polite literature, which more merit such a discussion. I shall first give a history of the rise and progress of language in several particulars, from its early to its more advanced periods; which shall be followed by a similar history of the rise and progress of writing. I shall next give some account of the construction of language, or the principles of universal grammar; and shall, lastly, apply these observations more particularly to the English tongue*

Language, in general, signifies the expression of

See dr. Adam Smith's dissertation on the formation of languages.—Treatise of the origin and progress of language, 2 vols.—Harris's Hermes, or a Philosophical Enquiry concerning language and Universal Grammar.—Essai sur l'Origine Connoissances Humaines, par l'Abbe Condillac.—Principes

our ideas by certain articulate sounds, which are used as the signs of those ideas. By articulate sounds, are meant those modulations of simple voice, or of sound emitted from the thorax, which are formed by means of the mouth and its several organs, the teeth, the tongue, the lips, and the palate. How far there is any natural connexion between the ideas of the mind and the sounds emitted, will appear from what I am afterwards to offer. But as the natural connexion can, upon any system, affect only a small part of the fabric of language; the connexion between words and ideas may, in general, be considered as arbitrary and conventional, owing to the agreement of men among themselves; the clear proof of which is, that different nations have different languages, or a different set of articulate sounds, which they have chosen for communicating their ideas.

This artificial method of communicating thought, we now behold carried to the highest perfection. Language is become a vehicle by which the most delicate and refined emotions of one mind can be transmitted, or, if we may so speak, transfused into another. Not only are names given to all objects around us, by which means an easy and speedy intercourse is carried on for providing the necessities of life, but all the relations and differences among these objects are minutely marked, the invisible sentiments of the mind are described, the most abstract notions and conceptions are rendered intelligible; and all the ideas which science

de Grammaire, par Marfais. Grammaire Generale et Raisonnee. — Traite de la Formation mechanique des langues, par le president de Brosses. — Discours sur l'Inegalite parmi les hommes, par Rousseau. — Grammaire generale, par Beauzee. — Principes de la Traduction, par Battenx. — Warburton's Divine Legation of Moses, vol. iii. — Sanctii Minerva, cum notis Perizonii. — Les vrais principes de la langue Francoise, par l'abbé Girard.

can discover, or imagination create, are known by their proper names. Nay, language has been carried so far, as to be made an instrument of the most refined luxury. Not resting in mere perspicuity, we require ornament also; not satisfied with having the conceptions of others made known to us, we make a farther demand, to have them so decked and adorned, as to entertain our fancy; and this demand, it is found very possible to gratify. In this state we now find language. In this state, it has been found among many nations for some thousand years. The object is become familiar; and, like the expanse of the firmament, and other great objects, which we are accustomed to behold, we behold it without wonder.

But carry your thoughts back to the first dawn of language among men. Reflect upon the feeble beginnings from which it must have arisen, and upon the many and great obstacles which it must have encountered in its progress; and you will find reason for the highest astonishment, on viewing the height which it has now attained. We admire several of the inventions of art; we plume ourselves on some discoveries which have been made in latter ages, serving to advance knowledge, and to render life comfortable; we speak of them as the boast of human reason. But certainly no invention is entitled to any such degree of admiration as that of language; which, too, must have been the product of the first and rudest ages, if indeed it can be considered as a human invention at all.

Think of the circumstances of mankind when languages began to be formed. They were a wandering, scattered race; no society among them except families; and the family society, too, very imperfect, as their method of living by hunting or pasture must have separated them frequently

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from one another. In this situation, when so much divided, and their intercourse so rare, how could any one set of sounds, or words, be generally agreed on as the signs of their ideas ? Supposing that a few, whom chance or necessity threw together, agreed by some means upon certain signs, yet by what authority could these be propagated among other tribes or families, so as to spread and grow up into a language ? One would think, that, in order to any language fixing and extending itself, men must have been previously gathered together in considerable numbers ; society must have been already far advanced ; and yet, on the other hand, there seems to have been an absolute necessity for speech, previous to the formation of society. For, by what bond could any multitude of men be kept together, or be made to join in the prosecution of any common interest, until once, by the intervention of speech, they could communicate their wants and intentions to one another ? So that, either how society could form itself, previously to language, or how words could rise into a language previously to society formed, seem to be points attended with equal difficulty. And when we consider farther, that curious analogy which prevails in the construction of almost all languages, and that deep and subtle logic on which they are founded, difficulties increase so much upon us, on all hands, that there seems to be no small reason for referring the first origin of all language to divine teaching or inspiration.

But supposing language to have a divine original, we cannot, however, suppose, that a perfect system of it was all at once given to man. It is much more natural to think, that God taught our first parents only such language as suited their present occasions ; leaving them, as he did in other things, to enlarge and improve it as their future necessities should require. Consequently, those first

rudiments of speech must have been poor and narrow ; and we are at full liberty to enquire in what manner, and by what steps, language advanced to the state in which we now find it. The history which I am to give of this progress, will suggest several things, both curious in themselves, and useful in our future disquisitions.

If we should suppose a period before any words were invented or known, it is clear, that men could have no other method of communicating to others what they felt, than by the cries of passion, accompanied with such motions and gestures as were farther expressive of passion. For these are the only signs which nature teaches all men, and which are understood by all. One who saw another going into some place where he himself had been frightened, or exposed to danger, and who sought to warn his neighbour of the danger, could contrive no other way of doing so, than by uttering those cries, and making those gestures, which are the signs of fear : just as two men, at this day, would endeavour to make themselves be understood by each other, who should be thrown together on a desolate island, ignorant of each other's language. Those exclamations, therefore, which by grammarians are called interjections, uttered in a strong and passionate manner, were, beyond doubt, the first elements or beginnings of speech.

When more enlarged communication became necessary, and names began to be assigned to objects, in what manner can we suppose men to have proceeded in this assignation of names, or invention of words ? Undoubtedly, by imitating, as much as they could, the nature of the object which they named, by the sound of the name which they gave to it. As a painter, who would represent a grass, must employ a green colour ; so, in the beginnings of language, one giving a name to any

thing harsh or boisterous, would of course employ a harsh or boisterous sound. He could not do otherwise, if he meant to excite in the hearer the idea of that thing which he sought to name. To suppose words invented, or names given, to things, in a manner purely arbitrary, without any ground or reason, is to suppose an effect without a cause. There must have always been some motive which led to the assignation of one name rather than another; and we can conceive no motive which would more generally operate upon men in their first efforts towards language, than a desire to paint, by speech, the objects which they named, in a manner more or less complete, according as the vocal organs had it in their power to effect this imitation.

Wherever objects were to be named, in which sound, noise, or motion were concerned, the imitation by words was abundantly obvious. Nothing was more natural, than to imitate, by the sound of the voice, the quality of the sound or noise which any external object made; and to form its name accordingly. Thus, in all languages, we find a multitude of words that are evidently constructed upon this principle. A certain bird is termed the cuckoo, from the sound which it emits. When one sort of wind is said to *whistle*, and another to *roar*; when a serpent is said to *hiss*; a fly to *buzz*, and falling timber to *crash*; when a stream is said to *flow*, and hail to *rattle*; the analogy between the word and the thing signified is plainly discernible.

In the names of objects which address the sight only, where neither noise nor motion are concerned, and still more in the terms appropriated to moral ideas, this analogy appears to fail. Many learned men, however, have been of opinion, that though, in such cases, it becomes more obscure,

yet it is not altogether lost ; but that throughout the radical words of all languages, there may be traced some degree of correspondence with the object signified. With regard to moral and intellectual ideas, they remark, that, in every language, the terms significant of them, are derived from the names of sensible objects to which they are conceived to be analogous ; and with regard to sensible objects, pertaining merely to sight, they remark, that their most distinguishing qualities have certain radical sounds appropriated to the expression of them, in a great variety of languages. Stability, for instance, fluidity, hollowness, smoothness, gentleness, violence, &c. they imagine to be painted by the sound of certain letters or syllables, which have some relation to those different states of visible objects, on account of an obscure resemblance which the organs of voice are capable of assuming to such external qualities. By this natural mechanism, they imagine all languages to have been at first constructed, and the roots of their capital words formed*.

* The author, who has carried his speculations on this subject the farthest, is the president Des Brosses, in his " *Traité de la formation mécanique des Langues.*" Some of the radical letters or syllables which he supposes to carry this expressive power in most known languages, are, St, to signify stability or rest ; Fl, to denote fluency ; Cl a gentle descent ; R, what relates to rapid motion ; C, to cavity or hollowness, &c. A century before his time, Dr. Wallis, in his *Grammar of the English Language*, had taken notice of these significant roots, and represented it as a peculiar excellency of our tongue, that, beyond all others, it expressed the nature of the objects which it names, by employing sounds sharper, softer, weaker, stronger, more obscure, or more strident, according as the idea which is to be suggested requires. He gives various examples. Thus ; words formed upon St, says denote firmness and strength, analogous to the Latin *stans*, as, stand, stay, staff, stop, stout, steady, stake, stamp, tallion, stately, &c. Words beginning with Str, intimate violent force, and energy, analogous to the Greek, *στερνωμι* ;

As far as this system is founded in truth, language appears to be not altogether arbitrary in its origin. Among the ancient Stoic and Platonic philosophers, it was a question much agitated, "Utrum nomina rerum sint natura, an impositi-
 "one? *φυσικῶς*;" by which they meant, whether words were merely conventional symbols; of the rise of which no account could be given, except the pleasure of the first inventors of language? or, whether there was some principle in nature that led to the assignation of particular names to particular objects? and those of the Platonic school favoured the latter opinion*.

as strive, strength, strike, stripe, stress, struggle, stride, stretch, strip, &c. Thr, implies forcible motion; as, throw, throb, thrust, through, threaten, thralldom. Wr, obliquity or distortion; as, wry, wrest, wreath, wrestle, wring, wrong, wrangle, wrath, wrack, &c. Sw, silent agitation, or lateral motion; as, sway, swing, swerve, sweep, swim. Sl, a gentle fall or less observable motion: as, slide, slip, fly, slit, slow, slack, sling. Sp, dissipation or expansion: as, spread, sprout, sprinkle, split, spill, spring. Terminations in Ash, indicate something acting nimbly and sharply: as, crash, gash, rash, flash, lash, flash. Terminations in Ush, something acting more obtusely and dully: as, crush, brush, hush, gush, blust. The learned author produces a great many more examples of the same kind, which seem to leave no doubt, that the analogies of sound have had some influence on the formation of words. At the same time, in all speculations of this kind, there is so much room for fancy to operate, that they ought to be adopted with much caution in forming any general theory.

* Vid. Plat. in Cratylo. "Nomina verbaque non posita fortuito, sed quadam vi et ratione naturæ facta esse, P. Nigidius in Grammaticis Commentariis docet: rem sane in philosophiæ dissertationibus celebrem. In eam rem multa argumenta dicit, cur videri possint verba esse naturalia, magis quam arbitraria. *Nos*, inquit, cum dicimus, motu quodam oris conveniente, cum ipsius verbi demonstratione utimur, et labias sensim primores emovemus, ac spiritum atque animam porro verbum, & ad eos quibus confermocinamur intendimus. At contra cum dicimus *Nos*, neque profuso intentoque flatu vocis, neque projectis labiis pronunciamus; sed et spiritum et

This principle, however, of a natural relation between words and objects, can only be applied to language in its most simple and primitive state. Though, in every tongue, some remains of it, as I have shown above, can be traced, it were utterly in vain to search for it throughout the whole construction of any modern language. As the multitude of terms increase in every nation, and the immense field of language is filled up, words, by a thousand fanciful and irregular methods of derivation and composition, come to deviate widely from the primitive character of their roots, and to lose all analogy or resemblance in sound to the things signified. In this state we now find language. Words, as we now employ them, taken in the general, may be considered as symbols, not as imitations; as arbitrary, or instituted, not natural signs of ideas. But there can be no doubt, I think, that language, the nearer we remount to its rise among men, will be found to partake more of a natural expression. As it could be originally formed on nothing but imitation, it would, in its primitive state, be more picturesque; much more barren indeed, and narrow in the circle of its terms, than now; but as far as it went, more expressive by sound of the thing signified. This, then, may be assumed as one character of the first state, or beginnings, of language, among every savage tribe.

A second character of language, in its early

labias quasi intra nosmet ipsos coercemus. Hoc fit idem et in eo quod dicimus, *tu*, et *ego*, et *mibi*, et *tibi*. Nam sicuti cum adnuimus, & abnuimus, motus quodam illo vel capitis, oculorum, a natura rei quam significat, non abhorret, ita his vocibus quasi gestus quidam oris et spiritus naturalis. Eadem ratio est in Græcis quoque vocibus quam esse in his animadvertimus."

A. GELLIUS, Noct. Atticæ, lib. x. cap. 4.

state, is drawn from the manner in which words were at first pronounced, or uttered, by men. Interjections, I showed, or passionate exclamations, were the first elements of speech. Men laboured to communicate their feelings to one another, by those expressive cries and gestures which nature taught them. After words, or names of objects, began to be invented, this mode of speaking, by natural signs, could not be all at once disused. For language, in its infancy, must have been extremely barren ; and there certainly was a period, among all rude nations, when conversation was carried on by a very few words, intermixed with many exclamations and earnest gestures. The small stock of words which men as yet possessed, rendered these helps absolutely necessary for explaining their conceptions ; and rude, uncultivated men, not having always at hand even the few words which they knew, would naturally labour to make themselves understood, by varying their tones of voice, and accompanying their tones with the most significant gesticulations they could make. At this day, when persons attempt to speak in any language which they possess imperfectly, they have recourse to all these supplemental methods, in order to render themselves more intelligible. The plan, too, according to which I have shown, that language was originally constructed, upon resemblance or analogy, as far as was possible, to the thing signified, would naturally lead men to utter their words with more emphasis and force, as long as language was a sort of painting by means of sound. For all those reasons this may be assumed as a principle, that the pronunciation of the earliest languages was accompanied with more gesticulation, and with more and greater inflexions of voice, than what we now use ; there was no

action in it ; and it was more upon a crying or singing tone.

To this manner of speaking, necessity first gave rise. But we must observe, that, after this necessity had, in a great measure, ceased, by language becoming, in process of time, more extensive and copious, the ancient manner of speech still subsisted among many nations ; and what had arisen from necessity, continued to be used for ornament. Wherever there was much fire and vivacity in the genius of nations, they were naturally inclined to a mode of conversation which gratified the imagination so much ; for, an imagination which is warm, is always prone to throw both a great deal of action, and a variety of tones, into discourse. Upon this principle, dr. Warburton accounts for so much speaking by action, as we find among the old testament prophets ; as when Jeremiah breaks the potter's vessel, in sight of the people ; throws a book into the Euphrates ; puts on bonds and yokes ; and carries out his household stuff, all which, he imagines, might be significant modes of expression, very natural in those ages, when men were accustomed to explain themselves so much by actions and gestures. In like manner, among the northern American tribes, certain motions and actions were found to be much used as explanatory of their meaning, on all their great occasions of intercourse with each other ; and by the belts and strings of wampum, which they gave and received, they were accustomed to declare their meaning, as much as by their discourses.

With regard to inflexions of voice, these are natural, that, to some nations, it has appeared easier to express different ideas, by varying the tone with which they pronounced the same word, than to contrive words for all their ideas. This

is the practice of the Chinese in particular. The number of words in their language is said not to be great ; but, in speaking, they vary each of their words on no less than five different tones, by which they make the same word signify five different things. This must give a great appearance of music or singing to their speech. For those inflexions of voice, which, in the infancy of language, were no more than harsh or dissonant cries, must, as language gradually polishes, pass into more smooth and musical sounds : and hence is formed, what we call, the prosody of a language.

It is remarkable, and deserves attention, that, both in the Greek and Roman languages, this musical and gesticulating pronunciation was retained in a very high degree. Without having attended to this, we shall be at loss in understanding several passages of the classics, which relate to the public speaking, and the theatrical entertainments, of the ancients. It appears, from many circumstances, that the prosody both of the Greeks and Romans, was carried much farther than ours ; or that they spoke with more, and stronger, inflexions of voice than we use. The quantity of their syllables was much more fixed than in any of the modern languages, and rendered much more sensible to the ear in pronouncing them. Besides quantities, or the difference of short and long, accents were placed upon most of their syllables, the acute, grave, and circumflex ; the use of which accents we have now entirely lost, but which, we know, determined the speaker's voice to rise or fall. Our modern pronunciation must have appeared to them a lifeless monotony. The declamation of their orators, and the pronunciation of their actors upon the stage, approached the nature of a recitative in music ; was capable of being marked in notes, and supported by instruments ; as several learned men have

proved. And if this was the case, as they have shown among the Romans, the Greeks, it is well known, were still a more musical people than the Romans, and carried their attention to tone and pronounciation much farther in every public exhibition. Aristotle, in his poeticks, considers the music of tragedy as one of its chief and most essential parts.

The case was parallel with regard to gestures : for strong tones, and animated gestures, we may observe, always go together. Action is treated of by all the ancient critics, as the chief quality in every public speaker. The action, both of the orators and the players in Greece and Rome, was far more vehement than what we are accustomed to. Roscius would have seemed a madman to us. Gesture was of such consequence upon the ancient stage, that there is reason for believing, that, on some occasions, the speaking and the acting part were divided, which, according to our ideas, would form a strange exhibition ; one player spoke the words in the proper tones, while another performed the corresponding motions and gestures. We learn from Cicero, that it was a contest between him and Roscius, whether he could express a sentiment in a greater variety of phrases, or Roscius in a greater variety of intelligible significant gestures. At last, gesture came to engross the stage wholly ; for, under the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, the favourite entertainment of the public was the pantomime, which was carried on entirely by mute gesticulation. The people were moved, and wept at it, as much at tragedies ; and the passion for it became so strong, that laws were obliged to be made, for training the senators from studying the pantomime art. Now, though in declamations and theatrical exhibitions, both tone and gesture were, unless, carried much farther than in common

discourse ; yet public speaking, of any kind, must, in every country, bear some proportion to the manner that is used in conversation ; and such public entertainments as I have now mentioned, could never have been relished by a nation, whose tones and gestures, in discourse, were as languid as ours.

When the barbarians spread themselves over the Roman empire, these more phlegmatic nations did not retain the accents, the tones, and gestures, which necessity at first introduced, and custom and fancy afterwards so long supported, in the Greek and Roman languages. As the Latin tongue was lost in their idioms, so the character of speech and pronunciation began to be changed throughout Europe. Nothing of the same attention was paid to the music of language, or to the pomp of declamation, and theatrical action. Both conversation and public speaking became more simple and plain, such as we now find it ; without that enthusiastic mixture of tones and gestures, which distinguished the ancient nations. At the restoration of letters, the genius of language was so much altered, and the manners of the people had become so different, that it was no easy matter to understand what the ancients had said, concerning their declamations and public spectacles. Our plain manner of speaking, in these northern countries, expresses the passions with sufficient energy, to move those who are not accustomed to any more vehement manner. But, undoubtedly, more varied tones, and more animated motions, carry a natural expression of warmer feelings. Accordingly, in different modern languages, the prosody of speech partakes more of music, in proportion to the liveliness and sensibility of the people. A Frenchman both varies his accents, and gesticulates while he speaks, much more than an Englishman. An Italian, a great deal more than either.

Musical pronunciation and expressive gesture are, to this day, the distinction of Italy.

From the pronunciation of language, let us proceed, in the third place, to consider the style of language, in its most early state, and its progress in this respect also. As the manner in which men at first uttered their words, and maintained conversation, was strong and expressive, enforcing their imperfectly expressed ideas by cries and gestures; so the language which they used, could be no other than full of figures and metaphors, not correct indeed, but forcible and picturesque.

We are apt, upon a superficial view, to imagine that those modes of expression, which are called figures of speech, are among the chief refinements of speech, not invented till after language had advanced to its later periods, and mankind were brought into a polished state; and that, then, they were devised by orators and rhetoricians. The contrary of this is the truth. Mankind never employed so many figures of speech, as when they had hardly any words for expressing their meaning.

For, first, the want of proper names for every object, obliged them to use one name for many; and, of course, to express themselves by comparisons, metaphors, allusions, and all those substituted forms of speech which render language figurative. Next, as the objects with which they were most conversant, were the sensible, material objects around them, names would be given to those objects long before words were invented for signifying the dispositions of the mind, or any sort of moral and intellectual ideas. Hence, the early language of men being entirely made up of words descriptive of sensible objects, it became, of necessity, extremely metaphorical. For, to signify any desire or passion, or any act or feeling of the mind, they had no precise expression which was

appropriated to that purpose, but were under a necessity of painting the emotion, or passion, which they felt, by allusion to those sensible objects which had most relation to it, and which could render it, in some sort, visible to others.

But it was not necessity alone, that gave rise to this figured style. Other circumstances, also, at the commencement of language, contributed to it. In the infancy of all societies, men are much under the dominion of imagination and passion. They live scattered and dispersed; they are unacquainted with the course of things; they are, every day, meeting with new and strange objects. Fear and surprise, wonder and astonishment, are their most frequent passions. Their language will necessarily partake of this character of their minds. They will be prone to exaggeration and hyperbole. They will be given to describe every thing with the strongest colours, and most vehement expressions; infinitely more than men living in the advanced and cultivated periods of society, when their imagination is more chastened, their passions are more tamed, and a wider experience has rendered the objects of life more familiar to them. Even the manner in which I before showed that the first tribes of men uttered their words, would have considerable influence on their style. Wherever strong exclamations, tones, and gestures, enter much into conversation, the imagination is always more exercised; a greater effort of fancy and passion is excited. Consequently, the fancy, kept awake, and rendered more sprightly by this mode of utterance, operates upon style, and enlivens it more.

These reasonings are confirmed by undoubted facts. The style of all the most early languages, among nations who are in the first and rude periods of society, is found, without exception, to be full of figures—hyperbolical and picturesque in

a high degree. We have a striking instance of this in the American languages, which are known, by the most authentic accounts, to be figurative to excess. The Iroquois and Illinois carry on their treaties and public transactions with bolder metaphors, and greater pomp of style, than we use in our poetical productions*.

Another remarkable instance is, the style of the old testament, which is carried on by constant allusions to sensible objects. Iniquity, or guilt, is expressed by "a spotted garment;" misery, by "drinking the cup of astonishment;" vain pursuits, by "feeding on ashes;" a sinful life, by "a crooked path;" prosperity, by "the candle of the Lord shining on our head;" and the like, in innumerable instances. Hence, we have been accustomed to call this sort of style the ori-

* Thus, to give an instance of the singular style of these nations, the five nations of Canada, when entering on a treaty of peace with us, expressed themselves by their chiefs, in the following language: "We are happy in having buried under ground the red axe, that has so often been dyed with the blood of our brethren. Now, in this fort, we inter the axe, and plant the tree of peace. We plant a tree, whose top will reach the Sun; and its branches spread abroad, so that it shall be seen afar off. May its growth never be stifled and choked; but may it shade both your country and ours with its leaves! Let us make fast its roots, and extend them to the utmost of your colonies. If the French should come to shake this tree, we would know it by the motion of its roots reaching into our country. May the great Spirit allow us to rest in tranquillity upon our mats, and never again dig up the axe to cut down the tree of peace! Let the earth be trod hard over it, where it lies buried. Let a strong stream run under the pit, to wash the evil away out of our sight and remembrance. The fire, that had long burned in Albany, is extinguished. The bloody bed is washed clean, and the tears are wiped from our eyes. We now renew the covenant chain of friendship. Let it be kept bright and clean as silver, and not suffered to contract any rust. Let not any one pull away his arm from it." These passages are extracted from Cadwallader Colden's history of the five Indian nations; where it appears, from the authentic documents he produces, that such is their genuine style.

ental style ; as fancying it to be peculiar to the nations of the East : whereas, from the American style, and from many other instances, it plainly appears not to have been peculiar to any one region or climate ; but to have been common to all nations, in certain periods of society and language.

Hence, we may receive some light concerning that seeming paradox, that poetry is more ancient than prose. I shall have occasion to discuss this point fully hereafter, when I come to treat of the nature and origin of poetry. At present, it is sufficient to observe, that from what has been said, it plainly appears, that the style of all language must have been originally poetical ; strongly tinged with that enthusiasm, and that descriptive, metaphorical expression, which distinguishes poetry.

As language, in its progress, began to grow more copious, it gradually lost that figurative style, which was its early character. When men were furnished with proper and familiar names for every object, both sensible and moral, they were not obliged to use so many circumlocutions. Style became more precise, and, of course, more simple. Imagination, too, in proportion as society advanced, had less influence over mankind. The vehement manner of speaking by tones and gestures, began to be disused. The understanding was more exercised ; the fancy, less. Intercourse among mankind becoming more extensive and frequent, clearness of style, in signifying their meaning to each other, was the chief object of attention. In place of poets, philosophers became the instructors of men ; and, in their reasonings on all different subjects, introduced that plainer and simpler style of composition, which we now call prose. Among the Greeks, Pherecydes of Scyros, the master of Pythagoras, is recorded to have been

the first, who, in this sense, composed any writing in prose. The ancient metaphorical and poetical dress of language, was now laid aside from the intercourse of men, and reserved for those occasions only, on which ornament was professedly studied.

Thus I have pursued the history of language through some of the variations it has undergone : I have considered it, in the first structure, and composition, of words ; in the manner of uttering or pronouncing words ; and in the style and character of speech. I have yet to consider it in another view, respecting the order and arrangement of words ; when we shall find a progress to have taken place, similar to what I have been now illustrating.

LECTURE VII.

RISE AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE, AND OF WRITING.

WHEN we attend to the order in which words are arranged in a sentence, or significant proposition, we find a very remarkable difference between the ancient and the modern tongues. The consideration of this will serve to unfold farther the genius of language, and to show the causes of those alterations, which it has undergone, in the progress of society.

In order to conceive distinctly the nature of that alteration of which I now speak, let us go back, as we did formerly, to the most early period of language. Let us figure to ourselves a savage, who beholds some object, such as fruit, which raises his desire, and who requests another to give it to him. Supposing our savage to be unacquainted with words, he would, in that case, labour to make himself be understood, by pointing earnestly at the object which he desired, and uttering at the same time a passionate cry. Supposing him to have acquired words, the first word which he uttered would, of course, be the name of that object. He would not express himself, according to our Eng-

lish order of construction, "Give me fruit;" but, according to the Latin order, "Fruit give me;" "Fructum da mihi:" For this plain reason, that his attention was wholly directed towards fruit, the desired object. This was the exciting idea; the object which moved him to speak; and, of course, would be the first named. Such an arrangement is precisely putting into words the gesture which nature taught the savage to make, before he was acquainted with words; and therefore it may be depended upon as certain, that he would fall most readily into this arrangement.

Accustomed now to a different method of ordering our words, we call this an inversion, and consider it as a forced and unnatural order of speech. But though not the most logical, it is, however, in one view, the most natural order; because, it is the order suggested by imagination and desire, which always impel us to mention their object in the first place. We might therefore conclude, *a priori*, that this would be the order in which words were most commonly arranged at the beginnings of language; and accordingly we find, in fact, that, in this order, words are arranged in most of the ancient tongues; as in the Greek and the Latin; and it is said, also, in the Russian, the Slavonic, the Gaelic, and several of the American tongues.

In the Latin language, the arrangement which most commonly obtains, is, to place first in the sentence, that word which expresses the principal object of the discourse, together with its circumstances; and afterwards, the person, or the thing that acts upon it. Thus Sallust, comparing together the mind and the body; "Animi imperio, corporis servitio, magis utimur;" which order certainly renders the sentence more lively and striking, than when it is arranged according

to our English construction ; “ We make most use of the direction of the soul, and of the service of the body.” The Latin order gratifies more the rapidity of the imagination, which naturally runs first to that which is its chief object ; and having once named it, carries it in view throughout the rest of the sentence. In the same manner in poetry :

Justum et tenacem propositi virum,
Non civium ardor, prava jubentium,
Non vultus instantis tyranni,
Mente quatit solida.—

Every person of taste must be sensible, that here the words are arranged with a much greater regard to the figure which the several objects make in the fancy, than our English construction admits ; which would require the “ Justum & tenacem propositi virum,” though, undoubtedly, the capital object in the sentence, to be thrown into the last place.

I have said, that, in the Greek and Roman languages, the most common arrangement is, to place that first which strikes the imagination of the speaker most. I do not, however, pretend, that this holds without exception. Sometimes regard to the harmony of the period requires a different order ; and in languages susceptible of so much musical beauty, and pronounced with so much tone and modulation as were used by those nations, the harmony of periods was an object carefully studied. Sometimes, too, attention to the perspicuity, to the force, or the artful suspension of the speaker's meaning, alter this order ; and produce such varieties in the arrangement, that it is not easy to reduce them to any one principle. But, in general, this was the genius and character of most of the ancient languages, to give such

full liberty to the collocation of words, as allowed them to assume whatever order was most agreeable to the speaker's imagination. The Hebrew is, indeed, an exception : which, though not altogether without inversions, yet employs them less frequently, and approaches nearer to the English construction, than either the Greek or the Latin.

All the modern languages of Europe have adopted a different arrangement from the ancient. In their prose compositions, very little variety is admitted in the collocation of words ; they are mostly fixed to one order ; and that order is, what may be called the order of the understanding. They place first in the sentence, the person or thing which speaks or acts ; next, its action ; and lastly, the object of its action. So that the ideas are made to succeed to one another, not according to the degree of importance which the several objects carry in the imagination, but according to the order of nature and of time.

An English writer, paying a compliment to a great man, would say thus : " It is impossible for me to pass over, in silence, such remarkable mildness, such singular and unheard-of clemency, and such unusual moderation, in the exercise of supreme power." Here we have first presented to us, the person who speaks, " It is impossible for *me* ;" next, what that person is to do, " impossible for him *to pass over in silence* ;" and lastly, the object which moves him so to do, " the mildness, clemency, and moderation of his patron." Cicero, from whom I have translated these words, just reverses this order ; beginning with the object, placing that first which was the exciting idea in the speaker's mind, and ending with the speaker and his action. " Tantam mansuetudinem, tam inusitatam inauditamque clementiam, tantumque in summa potestate rerum omnium modum,

“tacitus nullo modo præterire possum.” (Orat. pro Marcell.)

The Latin order is more animated ; the English, more clear and distinct. The Romans generally arranged their words, according to the order in which the ideas rose in the speaker's imagination. We arrange them according to the order in which the understanding directs those ideas to be exhibited, in succession, to the view of another. Our arrangement, therefore, appears to be the consequence of greater refinement in the art of speech ; as far as clearness in communication is understood to be the end of speech.

In poetry, where we are supposed to rise above the ordinary style, and to speak the language of fancy and passion, our arrangement is not altogether so limited ; but some greater liberty is allowed for transposition, and inversion. Even there, however, that liberty is confined within narrow bounds, in comparison of the ancient languages. The different modern tongues vary from one another, in this respect. The French language is, of them all, the most determinate in the order of its words, and admits the least of inversion, either in prose or poetry. The English admits it more. But the Italian retains the most of the ancient transpositive character ; though one is apt to think it attended with a little obscurity in the style of some of their authors, who deal most in these transpositions.

It is proper, next, to observe, that there is one circumstance in the structure of all the modern tongues, which, if necessary, limits their arrangement, in a great measure, to one fixed and determinate train. We have discussed those differences of termination, which, in the Greek and Latin, distinguished the several cases of nouns, and tenses of verbs ; and which, thereby, pointed out the

mutual relation of the several words in a sentence to one another, though the related words were disjoined, and placed in different parts of the sentence. This is an alteration in the structure of language, of which I shall have occasion to say more in the next lecture. One obvious effect of it is, that we have now, for the most part, no way left us to show the close relation of any two words to each other in meaning, but by placing them close to one another in the period. For instance; the Romans could, with propriety, express themselves thus :

*Extinctum nymphæ crudeli funere Daphnim
Flebant. ———*

Because “*Extinctum*” and “*Daphnim*,” being both in the accusative case, this showed, that the adjective and the substantive were related to each other, though placed at the two extremities of the line; and that both were governed by the active verb “*Flebant*,” to which “*Nymphæ*” plainly appeared to be the nominative. The different terminations here reduced all into order, and made the connexion of the several words perfectly clear. But let us translate these words literally into English, according to the Latin arrangement; “Dead the nymphs by a cruel fate *Daphnis* lamented;” and they become a perfect riddle, in which it is impossible to find any meaning.

It was by means of this contrivance, which obtained in almost all the ancient languages, of varying the termination of nouns and verbs, and thereby pointing out the concordance, and the government of the words, in a sentence, that they enjoyed so much liberty of transposition, and could marshal and arrange their words in any way that gratified the imagination or pleased the ear. When language came to be modelled by the northern

nations who overran the empire, they dropped the cases of nouns, and the different termination of verbs, with the more ease, because they placed no great value upon the advantages arising from such a structure of language. They were attentive only to clearness, and copiousness of expression. They neither regarded much the harmony of sound, nor sought to gratify the imagination by the collocation of words. They studied solely to express themselves in such a manner as should exhibit their ideas to others in the most distinct and intelligible order. And hence, if our language, by reason of the simple arrangement of its words, possesses less harmony, less beauty, and less force, than the Greek or Latin ; it is, however, in its meaning, more obvious and plain.

Thus I have shown what the natural progress of language has been, in several material articles : and this account of the genius and progress of language, lays a foundation for many observations, both curious and useful. From what has been said in this, and the preceding lecture, it appears; that language was, at first, barren in words, but descriptive by the sound of these words ; and expressive in the manner of uttering them, by the aid of significant tones and gestures : style was figurative and poetical : arrangement was fanciful and lively. It appears, that, in all the successive changes which language has undergone, as the world advanced, the understanding has gained ground on the fancy and imagination. The progress of language, in this respect, resembles the progress of age in man. The imagination is most vigorous and predominant in youth ; with advancing years, the imagination cools, and the understanding ripens. Thus language, proceeding from sterility to copiousness, hath, at the same time, proceeded from vivacity to accuracy ; from fire and enthusiasm, to coolness

and precision. Those characters of early language, descriptive sound, vehement tones and gestures, figurative style, and inverted arrangement, all hang together, have a mutual influence on each other ; and have all gradually given place to arbitrary sounds, calm pronunciation, simple style, plain arrangement. Language is become, in modern times, more correct, indeed, and accurate ; but, however, less striking and animated ; in its ancient state, more favourable to poetry and oratory ; in its present, to reason and philosophy.

Having finished my account of the progress of speech, I proceed to give an account of the progress of writing, which next demands our notice ; though it will not require so full a discussion as the former subject.

Next to speech, writing is, beyond doubt, the most useful art which men possess. It is plainly an improvement upon speech, and therefore must have been posterior to it in order of time. At first, men thought of nothing more than communicating their thoughts to one another, when present, by means of words, or sounds, which they uttered. Afterwards, they devised this further method, of mutual communication with one another, when absent, by means of marks or characters presented to the eye, which we call writing.

Written characters are of two sorts. They are either signs for things, or signs for words. Of the former sort, signs of things, are the pictures, hieroglyphics, and symbols, employed by the ancient nations ; of the latter sort, signs for words, are the alphabetical characters, now employed by all Europeans. These two kinds of writing are generically and essentially distinct.

Pictures were, undoubtedly, the first essay, towards writing. Imitation is so natural to man, that, in all ages, and among all nations, some me-

thods have obtained, of copying or tracing the likeness of sensible objects. Those methods would soon be employed by men for giving some imperfect information to others, at a distance, of what had happened ; or, for preserving the memory of facts which they sought to record. Thus, to signify that one man had killed another, they drew the figure of one man stretched upon the earth, and of another standing by him with a deadly weapon in his hand. We find, in fact, that, when America was first discovered, this was the only sort of writing known in the kingdom of Mexico. By historical pictures, the Mexicans are said to have transmitted the memory of the most important transactions of their empire. These, however, must have been extremely imperfect records ; and the nations who had no other, must have been very gross and rude. Pictures could do no more than delineate external events. They could neither exhibit the connexions of them, nor describe such qualities as were not visible to the eye, nor convey any idea of the dispositions, or words of men.

To supply, in some degree, this defect, there arose, in process of time, the invention of what are called, hieroglyphical characters ; which may be considered as the second stage of the art of writing. Hieroglyphics consist in certain symbols, which are made to stand for invisible objects, on account of an analogy or resemblance which such symbols were supposed to bear to the objects. Thus, an eye was the hieroglyphical symbol of knowledge ; a circle, of eternity, which has neither beginning, nor end. Hieroglyphics, therefore, were a more refined and extensive species of painting. Pictures delineated the resemblance of external visible objects. Hieroglyphics painted invisible objects, by analogies taken from the external world.

Among the Mexicans, were found some traces

of hieroglyphical characters, intermixed with their historical pictures. But Egypt was the country where this sort of writing was most studied and brought into a regular art. In hieroglyphics was conveyed all the boasted wisdom of their priests. According to the properties which they ascribed to animals, or the qualities with which they supposed natural objects to be endowed, they pitched upon them to be the emblems, or hieroglyphics, of moral objects ; and employed them in their writing for that end. Thus, ingratitude was denominated by a viper ; imprudence, by a fly ; wisdom, by an ant ; victory, by a hawk ; a dutiful child, by a stork ; a man universally shunned, by an eel, which they supposed to be found in company with no other fish. Sometimes they joined together two or more of these hieroglyphical characters ; as, a serpent with a hawk's head ; to denote nature, with God presiding over it. But, as many of those properties of objects, which they assumed for the foundation of their hieroglyphics, were merely imaginary, and the allusions drawn from them were forced and ambiguous—as the conjunction of their characters rendered them still more obscure, and must have expressed very indistinctly the connexions and relations of things ; this sort of writing could be no other than enigmatical and confused, in the highest degree ; and must have been a very imperfect vehicle of knowledge of any kind.

It has been imagined, that hieroglyphics were an invention of the Egyptian priests, for concealing their learning from common view ; and that, upon this account, it was preferred by them to the alphabetical method of writing. But this is certainly a mistake. Hieroglyphics were, undoubtedly, employed, at first, from necessity, not from choice or refinement ; and would never have been thought of, if alphabetical characters had been

known. The nature of the invention plainly shows it to have been one of those gross and rude essays towards writing, which were adopted in the early ages of the world ; in order to extend farther the first method which they had employed, of simple pictures, or representations of visible objects. Indeed, in after-times, when alphabetical writing was introduced into Egypt, and the hieroglyphical was, of course, fallen into disuse, it is known, that the priests still employed the hieroglyphical characters, as a sacred kind of writing, now become peculiar to themselves, and serving to give an air of mystery to their learning and religion. In this state, the Greeks found hieroglyphical writing, when they began to have intercourse with Egypt ; and some of their writers mistook this use, to which they found it applied, for the cause that had given rise to the invention.

As writing advanced, from pictures of visible objects, to hieroglyphics, or symbols of things invisible ; from these latter, it advanced, among some nations, to simple arbitrary marks which stood for objects, though without any resemblance or analogy to the objects signified. Of this nature was the method of writing practised among the Peruvians. They made use of small cords, of different colours ; and by knots upon these, of various sizes, and differently ranged, they contrived signs for giving information, and communicating their thoughts to one another.

Of this nature, also, are the written characters which are used to this day, throughout the great empire of China. The Chinese have no alphabet of letters, or simple sounds, which compose their words. But every single character which they use in writing, is significant of an idea ; it is a mark which stands for some one thing or object. By consequence, the number of these characters must be

immense. It must correspond to the whole number of objects or ideas, which they have occasion to express ; that is, to the whole number of words which they employ in speech : nay, it must be greater than the number of words ; one word, by varying the tone, with which it is spoken, may be made to signify several different things. They are said to have seventy thousand of those written characters. To read and write them to perfection, is the study of a whole life ; which subjects learning, among them, to infinite disadvantage ; and must have greatly retarded the progress of all science.

Concerning the origin of these Chinese characters, there have been different opinions, and much controversy. According to the most probable accounts, the Chinese writing began, like the Egyptian, with pictures, and hieroglyphical figures. These figures being, in progress, abbreviated in their form, for the sake of writing them easily, and greatly enlarged in their number, passed, at length, into those marks or characters which they now use, and which have spread themselves through several nations of the East. For we are informed, that the Japanese, the Tonquinese, and the Coreans, who speak different languages from one another, and from the inhabitants of China, use, however, the same written characters with them ; and, by this means, correspond intelligibly with each other in writing, though ignorant of the language spoken in their several countries ; a plain proof, that the Chinese characters are, like hieroglyphics, independent of language ; are signs of things, not of words.

We have one instance of this sort of writing in Europe. Our cyphers, as they are called, or arithmetical figures, 1, 2, 3, 4, &c. which we have derived from the Arabians, are significant marks, precisely of the same nature with the Chinese characters. They have no dependence on words ; but

each figure denotes an object ; denotes the number for which it stands ; and, accordingly, on being presented to the eye, is equally understood by all the nations who have agreed in the use of these cyphers ; by Italians, Spaniards, French, and English, however different the languages of those nations are from one another, and whatever different names they give, in their respective languages, to each numerical cypher.

As far, then, as we have yet advanced, nothing has appeared which resembles our letters, or which can be called writing, in the sense we now give to that term. What we have hitherto seen, were all direct signs for things, and made no use of the medium of sound, or words ; either signs by representation, as the Mexican pictures ; or signs by analogy, as the Egyptian hieroglyphics ; or signs by institution, as the Peruvian knots, the Chinese characters, and the Arabian cyphers.

At length, in different nations, men became sensible of the imperfection, the ambiguity, and the tediousness of each of these methods of communication with one another. They began to consider, that by employing signs which should stand not directly for things, but for the words which they used in speech for naming these things, a considerable advantage would be gained. For they reflected farther, that though the number of words in every language be, indeed, very great, yet the number of articulate sounds, which are used in composing these words, is comparatively small. The same simple sounds are continually recurring and repeated ; and are combined together, in various ways, for forming all the variety of words which we utter. They bethought themselves, therefore, of inventing signs, not for each word, by itself, but for each of those simple sounds which we employ in forming our words ; and by joining together a few of those signs, they saw

that it would be practicable to express, in writing, the whole combinations of sounds which our words require.

The first step, in this new progress, was the invention of an alphabet of syllables, which probably preceded the invention of an alphabet of letters, among some of the ancient nations ; and which is said to be retained, to this day, in *Æthiopia*, and some countries of *India*. By fixing upon a particular mark, or character, for every syllable in the language; the number of characters, necessary to be used in writing, was reduced within a much smaller compass than the number of words in the language. Still, however, the number of characters was great ; and must have continued to render both reading and writing very laborious arts. Till, at last, some happy genius arose ; and tracing the sounds made by the human voice, to their most simple elements, reduced them to a very few vowels and consonants ; and, by affixing to each of these the signs which we now call letters, taught men how, by their combinations, to put in writing all the different words, or combinations of sound, which they employed in speech. By being reduced to this simplicity, the art of writing was brought to its highest state of perfection ; and, in this state, we now enjoy it in all the countries of Europe.

To whom we are indebted for this sublime and refined discovery, does not appear. Concealed by the darkness of remote antiquity, the great inventor is deprived of those honours which would still be paid to his memory, by all the lovers of knowledge and learning. It appears from the books which *Moses* has written, that, among the Jews, and probably among the Egyptians, letters had been invented prior to his age. The universal tradition among the ancients is, that they were first imported into Greece by *Cadmus* the Phœnician ; who, accor-

ding to the common system of chronology, was cotemporary with Joshua ; according to sir Isaac Newton's system, cotemporary with king David. As the Phœnicians are not known to have been the inventors of any art or science, though, by means of their extensive commerce, they propagated the discoveries made by other nations, the most probable and natural account of the origin of alphabetical characters, is, that they took rise in Egypt, the first civilized kingdom of which we have any authentic accounts, and the great source of arts and polity among the ancients. In that country, the favourite study of hieroglyphical characters, had directed much attention to the art of writing. Their hieroglyphics are known to have been intermixed with abbreviated symbols, and arbitrary marks ; whence, at last, they caught the idea of contriving marks, not for things merely, but for sounds. Accordingly, Plato (in *Phædo*) expressly attributes the invention of letters to Theuth, the Egyptian, who is supposed to have been the *Hermes*, or *Mercury*, of the Greeks. Cadmus himself, though he passed from Phœnicia to Greece, yet is affirmed, by several of the ancients, to have been originally of Thebes, in Egypt. Most probably, Moses carried with him the Egyptian letters into the land of Canaan ; and there being adopted by the Phœnicians, who inhabited part of that country, they were transmitted into Greece.

The alphabet, which Cadmus brought into Greece, was imperfect, and is said to have contained only sixteen letters. The rest were afterwards added, according as signs for proper sounds were found to be wanting. It is curious to observe, that the letters, which we use at this day, can be traced back to this very alphabet of Cadmus. The Roman alphabet, which obtains with us, and with most of the European nations, is plainly formed on the

Greek, with a few variations. And all learned men observe, that the Greek characters, especially according to the manner in which they are formed in the oldest inscriptions, have a remarkable conformity with the Hebrew or Samaritan characters, which, it is agreed, are the same with the Phœnician, or the alphabet of Cadmus. Invert the Greek characters from left to right, according to the Phœnician and Hebrew manner of writing, and they are nearly the same. Besides the conformity of figure, the names or denominations of the letters, alpha, beta, gamma, &c. and the order in which the letters are arranged, in all the several alphabets, Phœnician, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman, agree so much, as amounts to a demonstration, that they were all derived originally from the same source. An invention so useful and simple, was greedily received by mankind, and propagated with speed and facility through many different nations.

The letters were, originally, written from the right hand towards the left ; that is, in a contrary order to what we now practise. This manner of writing obtained among the Assyrians, Phœnicians, Arabians, and Hebrews ; and, from some very old inscriptions, appears to have obtained also among the Greeks. Afterwards, the Greeks adopted a new method, writing their lines alternately from the right to the left, and from the left to the right, which was called *boustrophedon* ; or, writing after the manner in which oxen plough the ground. Of this, several specimens still remain ; particularly, the inscription on the famous Sigæan monument ; and down to the days of Solon, the legislator of Athens, this continued to be the common method of writing. At length, the motion from the left hand to the right being found more natural and commodious, the practice of writing, in this direction, prevailed throughout all the countries of Europe.

Writing was long a kind of engraving. Pillars, and tables of stone, were first employed for this purpose, and afterwards, plates of the softer metals, such as lead. In proportion as writing became more common, lighter and more portable substances were employed. The leaves and the bark of certain trees, were used in some countries ; and in others, tablets of wood, covered with a thin coat of soft wax, on which the impresson was made with a stylus of iron. In later times, the hides of animals, properly prepared, and polished into parchement, were the most common materials. Our present method of writing on paper, is an invention of no greater antiquity than the fourteenth century.

Thus I have given some account of the progress of these two great arts, speech and writing ; by which men's thoughts are communicated, and the foundation laid for all knowledge and improvement. Let us conclude the subject, with comparing, in a few words, spoken language, and written language ; or words uttered in our hearing, with words represented to the eye ; where we shall find several advantages and disadvantages to be balanced on both sides.

The advantages of writing above speech are, that writing is both a more extensive, and a more permanent method of communication. More extensive ; as it is not confined within the narrow circle of those who hear our words, but, by means of written characters, we can send our thoughts abroad, and propagate them through the world ; we can lift our voice, so as to speak to the most distant regions of the earth. More permanent also ; as it prolongs this voice to the most distant ages ; it gives us the means of recording our sentiments to futurity, and of perpetuating the instructive memory of past transactions. It likewise affords this advantage to

such as read, above such as hear, that, having the written characters before their eyes, they can arrest the sense of the writer. They can pause, and revolve, and compare at their leisure, one passage with another ; whereas, the voice is fugitive and passing ; you must catch the words the moment they are uttered, or you lose them forever.

But, although these be so great advantages of written language, that speech, without writing, would have been very inadequate for the instruction of mankind : yet we must not forget to observe, that spoken language has a great superiority over written language, in point of energy or force. The voice of the living speaker, makes an impression on the mind, much stronger than can be made by the perusal of any writing. The tones of voice, the looks and gesture, which accompany discourse, and which no writing can convey, render discourse, when it is well managed, infinitely more clear, and more expressive, than the most accurate writing. For tones, looks, and gestures, are natural interpreters of the sentiments of the mind. They remove ambiguities ; they enforce impressions ; they operate on us by means of sympathy, which is one of the most powerful instruments of persuasion. Our sympathy is always awakened more by hearing the speaker, than by reading his works in our closet. Hence, though writing may answer the purposes of mere instruction, yet all the great and high efforts of eloquence must be made, by means of spoken, not of written language.

LECTURE VIII.

STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.

AFTER having given an account of the rise and progress of language, I proceed to treat of its structure, or of general grammar. The structure of language is extremely artificial ; and there are few sciences in which a deeper, or more refined logic is employed, than in grammar. It is apt to be slighted by superficial thinkers, as belonging to those rudiments of knowledge, which were inculcated upon us in our earliest youth. But what was then inculcated, before we could comprehend its principles, would abundantly repay our study in maturer years ; and to the ignorance of it, must be attributed many of those fundamental defects which appear in writing.

Few authors have written with philosophical accuracy on the principles of general grammar ; and, what is more to be regretted, fewer still have thought of applying those principles to the English language. While the French tongue has long been an object of attention to many able and ingenious writers of that nation, who have considered its construction, and determined its propriety with great

accuracy, the genius and grammar of the English, to the reproach of the country, have not been studied with equal care, or ascertained with the same precision. Attempts have been made, indeed, of late, towards supplying this defect; and some able writers have entered on the subject; but much remains yet to be done.

I do not propose to give any system, either of grammar in general, or of English grammar in particular. A minute discussion of the niceties of language would carry us too much off from other objects, which demand our attention in this course of lectures. But I propose to give a general view of the chief principles relating to this subject in observations on the several parts, of which speech or language is composed; remarking, as I go along, the peculiarities of our own tongue. After which, I shall make some more particular remarks on the genius of the English language.

The first thing to be considered, is, the division of the several parts of speech. The essential parts of speech are the same in all languages. There must always be some words which denote the names of objects, or mark the subject of discourse; other words, which denote the qualities of those objects, and express what we affirm concerning them; and other words, which point out their connexions and relations. Hence, substantives, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, prepositions, and conjunctions, must necessarily be found in all languages. The most simple and comprehensive division of the parts of speech is, into substantives, attributives, and connectives*. Substantives are all the words which

* Quintilian informs us, that this was the most ancient division. "Tum videbit quot & quæ sunt partes orationis. Quanquam de numero parum convenit. Veteres enim, quomodo fuerant Aristoteles atque Theodectes, verba modo, & nomina, & convinctiones tradiderunt. Videlicet, quod in verbis vim

express the names of objects, or the subjects of discourse ; attributives are all the words which express any attribute, property, or action of the former ; connectives are what express the connexions, relations, and dependencies, which take place among them. The common grammatical division of speech into eight parts, nouns, pronouns, verbs, participles, adverbs, prepositions, interjections, and conjunctions ; is not very logical, as might be easily shown ; as it comprehends, under the general term of nouns, both substantives and adjectives, which are parts of speech generically and essentially distinct ; while it makes a separate part of speech of participles, which are no other than verbal adjectives. However, as these are the terms to which our ears have been most familiarised, and, as an exact logical division is of no great consequence to our present purpose, it will be better to make use of these known terms than of any other.

We are naturally led to begin with the consideration of substantive nouns, which are the foundation of all grammar, and may be considered as the most ancient part of speech. For, assuredly, as soon as men had got beyond simple interjections, or exclamations of passion, and began to communicate themselves by discourse, they would be under a necessity of assigning names to the objects they saw around them ; which, in grammatical language, is called the invention of substantive nouns*. And

*sermonis, in nominibus materiam (quia alterum est quod loquimur, alterum de quo loquimur), in convictionibus autem complexum eorum esse judicarunt ; quas conjunctiones a plerisque dici scio ; sed hec videtur, ex *εὐρισμῷ* magis, propria translatio. Paulatim a philosophicis ac maxime a stoicis, auctus est numerus ; ac primum convictionibus articuli adjecti ; post præpositiones ; nominibus, appellatio, deinde pronomen ; deinde mistum verbo participium ; ipsis verbis, adverbia." Lib. I. cap. iv.*

* I do not mean to assert, that, among all nations, the first invented words were simple and regular substantive nouns :

here, at our first setting out, somewhat curious occurs. The individual objects which surround us, are infinite in number. A savage, wherever he looked, beheld forests and trees. To give separate names to every one of those trees, would have been an endless and impracticable undertaking. His first object was, to give a name to that particular tree, whose fruit relieved his hunger, or whose shade protected him from the sun. But observing, that though other trees were distinguished from this by peculiar qualities of size or appearance, yet, that they also agreed and resembled one another, in certain common qualities, such as springing from a root, and bearing branches and leaves ; he formed

Nothing is more difficult, than to ascertain the precise steps by which men proceeded in the formation of language. Names for objects must, doubtless, have arisen in the most early stages of speech. But it is probable, as the learned author of the treatise, *On the origin and progress of language*, has shown, (vol. i. p. 371. 395.), that, among several savage tribes, some of the first articulate sounds that were formed, denoted a whole sentence rather than the name of a particular object ; conveying some information, or expressing some desires or fears, suited to the circumstances in which that tribe was placed, or relating to the business they had most frequent occasion to carry on ; as, the lion is coming, the river is swelling, &c. Many of their first words, it is likewise probable, were not simple substantive nouns, but substantives, accompanied with some of those attributes, in conjunction with which they were most frequently accustomed to behold them : as, the great bear, the little hut, the wound made by the hatchet, &c. Of all which, the author produces instances from several of the American languages : and it is, undoubtedly, suitable to the natural course of the operations of the human mind, thus to begin with particulars the most obvious to sense, and to proceed, from these, to more general expressions. He likewise observes, that the words of those primitive tongues are far from being, as we might suppose them, rude and short, and crowded with consonants ; but, on the contrary, are, for the most part, long words and full of vowels. This is the consequence of their being formed upon the natural sounds which the voice utters with most ease, a little varied and distinguished by articulation : and he shows this to hold, in fact, among most of the barbarous languages which are known.

in his mind, some general idea of those common qualities, and ranging all that possessed them under one class of objects, he called that whole class, a *tree*. Longer experience taught him to subdivide this genus into the several species, of oak, pine, ash, and the rest, according as his observation extended to the several qualities in which these trees agreed or differed.

But, still, he made use only of general terms in speech. For the oak, the pine, and the ash, were names of whole classes of objects; each of which included an immense number of undistinguished individuals. Here then, it appears, that though the formation of abstract or general conceptions, is supposed to be a difficult operation of the mind; such conceptions must have entered into the very first formation of language. For if we except only the proper names of persons, such as Cæsar, John, Peter, all the other substantive nouns, which we employ in discourse, are the names, not of individual objects, but of very extensive genera, or species of objects; as, man, lion, house, river, &c. We are not, however, to imagine, that this invention of general, or abstract terms, requires any great exertion of metaphysical capacity: for, by whatever steps the mind proceeds in it, it is certain, that, when men have once observed resemblances among objects, they are naturally inclined to call all those which resemble one another, by one common name; and of course to class them under one species. We may daily observe this practised by children, in their first attempts towards acquiring language.

But now, after language had proceeded as far as I have described, the notification, which it made of objects, was still very imperfect: for, when one mentioned to another, in discourse, any substantive noun; such as, man, lion, or tree, how was it to

be known which man, which lion, or which tree, he meant, among the many comprehended under one name? Here occurs a very curious, and a very useful contrivance for specifying the individual object intended, by means of that part of speech called the article.

The force of the article consists, in pointing, or singling out from the common mass, the individual of which we mean to speak. In English, we have two articles, *a* and *the*; *a* is more general and unlimited; *the* more definite and special. *A* is much the same with *one*; and marks only any one individual of a species; that individual being either unknown, or left undetermined; as, a lion, a king. *The*, which possesses more properly the force of the article, ascertains some known or determined individual of the species; as the lion, the king.

Articles are words of great use in speech. In some languages, however, they are not found. The Greeks have but one article, *ὁ, ἡ, το*, which answers to our definite, or proper article, *the*. They have no word which answers to our article *a*; but they supply its place by the absence of their article: Thus, *Βασιλεὺς* signifies, a king; *ὁ Βασιλεὺς*, the king. The Latins have no article. In the room of it, they employ pronouns, as, *hic, ille, iste*, for pointing out the objects which they want to distinguish. "Noster sermo," says Quintilian, "articulos non desiderat, ideoque in alias partes orationis sparguntur." This, however, appears to me a defect in the Latin tongue; as articles contribute much to the clearness and precision of language.

In order to illustrate this, remark, what difference there is in the meaning of the following expressions, in English, depending wholly on the different employment of the articles: "The son of a king—The son of the king—A son of the king's." Each of these three phrases has an entirely different mean-

ing, which I need not explain, because any one who understands the language, conceives it clearly at first hearing, through the different application of the articles, *a* and *the*. Whereas, in Latin, "*filius regis*," is wholly undetermined; and to explain, in which of these three senses it is to be understood, for it may bear any of them, a circumlocution of several words must be used. In the same manner, "*are you a king? are you the king?*" are questions of quite separate import; which, however, are confounded together in the Latin phrase, "*esne tu rex?*" "*Thou art a man*," is a very general and harmless position; but, "*thou art the man*," is an assertion, capable, we know, of striking terror and remorse into the heart. These observations illustrate the force and importance of articles: and, at the same time, I gladly lay hold of any opportunity of showing the advantages of our own language.

Besides this quality of being particularised by the article, three affections belong to substantive nouns, number, gender, and case, which require our consideration.

Number distinguishes them as one, or many, of the same kind, called the singular and plural; a distinction found in all languages, and which must, indeed, have been coeval with the very infancy of language; as there were few things which men had more frequent occasion to express, than the difference between one and many. For the greater facility of expressing it, it has, in all languages, been marked by some variation made upon the substantive noun; as we see, in English, our plural is commonly formed by the addition of the letter *S*. In the Hebrew, Greek, and some other ancient languages, we find, not only a plural, but a dual number; the rise of which may very naturally be accounted for, from separate terms of numbering

not being yet invented, and one, two, and many, being all, or, at least, the chief numeral distinctions which men, at first, had any occasion to take notice of.

Gender is an affection of substantive nouns, which will lead us into more discussion than number. Gender being founded on the distinction of the two sexes, it is plain, that in a proper sense, it can only find place in the names of living creatures, which admit the distinction of male and female ; and, therefore, can be ranged under the masculine or feminine genders. All other substantive nouns ought to belong, to what grammarians call, the neuter gender, which is meant to imply the negation of either sex. But, with respect to this distribution, somewhat singular hath obtained in the structure of language. For, in correspondence to that distinction of male and female sex, which runs through all the classes of animals, men have, in most languages, ranked a great number of inanimate objects also, under the like distinctions of masculine and feminine. Thus we find it, both in the Greek and Latin tongues. *Gladius*, a sword, for instance, is masculine ; *sagitta*, an arrow, is feminine ; and this assignation of sex to inanimate objects, this distinction of them into masculine and feminine, appears often to be entirely capricious ; derived from no other principle than the casual structure of the language, which refers to a certain gender, words of a certain termination. In the Greek and Latin, however, all inanimate objects are not distributed into masculine and feminine ; but many of them are also classed, where all of them ought to have been, under the neuter gender ; as, *templum*, a church ; *sedile*, a seat.

But the genius of the French and Italian tongues differs, in this respect, from the Greek and Latin,

In the French and Italian, from whatever cause it has happened, so it is, that the neuter gender is wholly unknown, and that all their names of inanimate objects are put upon the same footing with living creatures ; and distributed, without exception, into masculine and feminine. The French have two articles, the masculine *le*, and the feminine *la* ; and one or other of these is prefixed to all substantive nouns in the language, to denote their gender. The Italians make the same universal use of their articles *il* and *lo*, for the masculine ; and *la* for the feminine.

In the English language, it is remarkable that there obtains a peculiarity quite opposite. In the French and Italian, there is no neuter gender. In the English, when we use common discourse, all substantive nouns, that are not names of living creatures, are neuter, without exception. *He*, *she*, and *it*, are the marks of the three genders ; and we always use *it*, in speaking of any object where there is no sex, or where the sex is not known. The English is, perhaps, the only language in the known world (except the Chinese, which is said to agree with it in this particular), where the distinction of gender is properly and philosophically applied in the use of words, and confined, as it ought to be, to mark the real distinctions of male and female.

Hence arises a very great and signal advantage of the English tongue, which it is of consequence to remark*. Though in common discourse, as I have already observed, we employ only the proper and literal distinction of sexes ; yet the genius of the language permits us, whenever it will add beauty to our discourse, to make the names of inanimate objects masculine or feminine in a metapho-

* The following observations on the metaphorical use of genders, in the English language, are taken from mr. Harris's *Hermes*.

rical sense ; and when we do so, we are understood to quit the literal style, and to use one of the figures of discourse.

For instance ; if I am speaking of virtue, in the course of ordinary conversation, or of strict reasoning, I refer the word to no sex or gender ; I say, “ virtue is its own reward, or, it is the law of our nature.” But if I choose to rise into a higher tone ; if I seek to embellish and animate my discourse, I give a sex to virtue ; I say, “ She descends from Heaven ;” “ she alone confers true honour upon man ;” “ her gifts are the only durable rewards.” By this means, we have it in our power to vary our style at pleasure. By making a very slight alteration, we can personify any object that we choose to introduce with dignity ; and by this change of manner, we give warning, that we are passing from the strict and logical, to the ornamented and rhetorical style.

This is an advantage, which, not only every poet, but every good writer and speaker in prose is, on many occasions, glad to lay hold of, and improve : and it is an advantage peculiar to our tongue ; no other language possesses it. For, in other languages, every word has one fixed gender, masculine, feminine, or neuter, which can, upon no occasion, be changed ; *agora*, for instance, in Greek—*virtus* in Latin—and *la vertu* in French—are uniformly feminine. *She* must always be the pronoun answering to the word, whether you be writing in poetry or prose, whether you be using the style of reasoning, or that of declamation : whereas, in English, we can either express ourselves with the philosophical accuracy of giving no gender to things inanimate ; or by giving them gender, and transforming them into persons, we adapt them to the style of poetry, and, when it is proper, we enliven prose. It deserves to be further remarked, on this sub-

ject, that, when we employ that liberty which our language allows, of ascribing sex to any inanimate object, we have not, however, the liberty of making it of what gender we please, masculine or feminine ; but are, in general, subjected to some rule of gender, which the currency of language has fixed to that object. The foundation of that rule is imagined, by Mr. Harris, in his " philosophical enquiry, into the principles of grammar," to be laid in a certain distant resemblance, or analogy, to the natural distinction of the two sexes.

Thus, according to him, we commonly give the masculine gender to those substantive nouns used figuratively, which are conspicuous for the attributes of imparting, or communicating ; which are by nature strong and efficacious, either to good or evil ; or which have a claim to some eminence, whether laudable or not. Those again, he imagines to be generally made feminine, which are conspicuous for the attributes of containing, and of bringing forth ; which have more of the passive in their nature, than the active ; which are peculiarly beautiful, or amiable ; or which have respect to such excesses as are rather feminine than masculine. Upon these principles, he takes notice, that the sun is always put in the masculine gender with us ; the moon in the feminine, as being the receptacle of the sun's light. The earth is, universally, feminine. A ship, a country, a city, are likewise made feminine, as receivers, or containers. God, in all languages, is masculine. Time, we make masculine, on account of its mighty efficacy ; virtue, feminine, from its beauty, and its being the object of love. Fortune is always feminine. Mr. Harris imagines, that the reasons which determine the gender of such capital words as these, hold in most other languages, as well as the English. This, however, appears doubtful. A variety of circumstances, which

seem casual to us, because we cannot reduce them to principles, must, unquestionably, have influenced the original formation of languages; and in no article whatever does language appear to have been more capricious, and to have proceeded less according to fixed rule, than in the imposition of gender upon things inanimate; especially among such nations as have applied the distinction of masculine and feminine to all substantive nouns.

Having discussed gender, I proceed, next, to another remarkable peculiarity of substantive nouns, which, in the style of grammar, is called their declension by cases. Let us, first, consider what cases signify. In order to understand this, it is necessary to observe, that, after men had given names to external objects, had particularised them by means of the article, and distinguished them by number and gender, still their language remained extremely imperfect, till they had devised some method of expressing the relations which those objects bore, one towards another. They would find it of little use to have a name for man, lion, tree, river, without being able, at the same time, to signify how these stood with respect to each other; whether, as approaching to, receding from, joined with, and the like. Indeed, the relations which objects bear to one another, are immensely numerous; and therefore, to devise names for them all, must have been among the last and most difficult refinements of language. But, in its most early periods, it was absolutely necessary to express, in some way or other, such relations as were most important, and as occurred most frequently in common speech. Hence the genitive, dative, and ablative cases of nouns, which express the noun itself, together with those relations, *of, to, from, with, and by*; the relations which we have the most frequent occasion to mention. The proper idea, then, of cases in declen-

tion, is no other than an expression of the state, or relation, which one object bears to another, denoted by some variation made upon the name of that object; most commonly in the final letters, and by some languages, in the initial.

All languages, however, do not agree in this mode of expression. The Greek, Latin, and several other languages, use declension. The English, French, and Italian, do not; or, at most, use it very imperfectly. In place of the variations of cases, the modern tongues express the relations of objects, by means of the words called prepositions, which denote those relations, prefixed to the name of the object. English nouns have no case whatever, except a sort of genitive, commonly formed by the addition of the letter *s* to the noun; as when we say "Dryden's poems," meaning the poems of Dryden. Our personal pronouns have also a case, which answers to the accusative of the Latin, *I* *me*,—*he*, *him*,—*who*, *whom*. There is nothing, then, or at least very little, in the grammar of our language, which corresponds to declension in the ancient languages.

Two questions, respecting this subject, may be put. First, which of these methods of expressing relations, whether that by declension, or that by prepositions, was the most ancient usage in language? And next, which of them has the best effect? Both methods, it is plain, are the same as to the sense, and differ only in form. For the significance of the Roman language would not have been altered, though the nouns, like ours, had been without cases, provided they had employed prepositions; and though, to express a disciple of Plato, they had said, "*discipulus de Plato*," like the modern Italians, in place of "*discipulus Platonis*."

Now, with respect to the antiquity of cases, although they may, on first view, seem to constitute

a more artificial method than the other, of denoting relations, yet there are strong reasons for thinking that this was the earliest method practised by men. We find, in fact, that declensions and cases are used in most of what are called the mother tongues, or original languages, as well as in the Greek and Latin. And a very natural and satisfying account can be given why this usage should have early obtained. Relations are the most abstract and metaphysical ideas of any which men have occasion to form, when they are considered by themselves, and separated from the related object. It would puzzle any man, as has been well observed by an author on this subject, to give a distinct account of what is meant by such a word as *of*, or *from*, when it stands by itself, and to explain all that may be included under it. The first rude inventors of language, therefore, would not, for a long while, arrive at such general terms. In place of considering any relation in the abstract, and devising a name for it, they would much more easily conceive it in conjunction with a particular object; and they would express their conceptions of it, by varying the name of that object through all the different cases; *hominis*, of a man; *homini*, to a man; *homine*, with a man, &c.

But, though this method of declension was, probably, the only method which men employed, at first, for denoting relations, yet, in progress of time, many other relations being observed, besides those which are signified by the cases of nouns, and men also becoming more capable of general and metaphysical ideas, separate names were gradually invented for all the relations which occurred, forming that part of speech which we now call prepositions. Prepositions being once introduced, they were found to be capable of supplying the place of cases, by being prefixed to the nominative of the noun.

Hence, it came to pass, that, as nations were intermixed by migrations and conquests, and were obliged to learn, and adopt the languages of one another, prepositions supplanted the the use of cases and declensions. When the Italian tongue, for instance, sprung out of the Roman, it was found more easy and simple, by the Gothic nations, to accommodate a few prepositions to the nominative of every noun, and to say *di Roma*, *al Roma*, *di Carthago*, *al Carthago*, than to remember all the variety of terminations, *Rome*, *Romam*, *Carthaginiis*, *Carthaginem*, which the use of declensions required in the ancient nouns. By this progress we can give a natural account, how nouns, in our modern tongues, come to be so void of declension : a progress which is fully illustrated in dr. Adam Smith's ingenious dissertation on the formation of languages..

With regard to the other question on this subject, which of these two methods is of the greater utility and beauty ? we shall find advantages and disadvantages to be balanced on both sides. There is no doubt, that, by abolishing cases, we have rendered the structure of modern languages more simple. We have disembarressed it of all the intricacy which arose from the different forms of declension, of which the Romans had no fewer than five ; and from all the irregularities in these several declensions. We have thereby rendered our languages more easy to be acquired, and less subject to the perplexity of rules. But, though the simplicity and ease of language be great and estimable advantages, yet there are also such disadvantages attending the modern method, as leave the balance, on the whole, doubtful, or rather incline it to the side of antiquity.

For, in the first place, by our constant use of prepositions for expressing the relations of things, we have filled language with a multitude of those little

words, which are eternally occurring in every sentence, and may be thought thereby to have encumbered speech, by an addition of terms ; and by rendering it more prolix, to have enervated its force. In the second place, we have certainly rendered the sound of language less agreeable to the ear, by depriving it of that variety and sweetness, which arose from the length of words, and the change of terminations, occasioned by the cases in the Greek and Latin. But, in the third place, the most material disadvantage is, that, by this abolition of cases, and by a similar alteration, of which I am to speak in the next lecture, in the conjugation of verbs, we have deprived ourselves of that liberty of transposition in the arrangement of words, which the ancient languages enjoyed.

In the ancient tongues, as I formerly observed, the different terminations produced by declension and conjugation, pointed out the reference of the several words of a sentence to one another, without the aid of juxtaposition ; suffered them to be placed, without ambiguity, in whatever order was most suited to give force to the meaning, or harmony to the sound. But now, having none of those marks of relation incorporated with the words themselves, we have no other way left us, of showing what words in a sentence are most closely connected in meaning, than that of placing them close by one another in the period. The meaning of the sentence is brought out in separate members and portions ; it is broken down and divided. Whereas the structure of the Greek and Roman sentences, by the government of their nouns and verbs, presented the meaning so interwoven and compounded in all its parts, as to make us perceive it in one united view. The closing words of the period ascertained the relation of each member to another ; and all that ought to be connected in our idea, ap-

peared connected in the expression. Hence, more brevity, more vivacity, more force. That luggage of particles (as an ingenious author happily expresses it), which we are obliged always to carry along with us, both clogs style, and enfeebles sentiment*.

Pronouns are the class of words most nearly related to substantive nouns ; being, as the name imports, representatives, or substitutes, of nouns. *I, thou, he, she, and it*, are no other than an abridged way of naming the persons, or objects, with which we have immediate intercourse, or to which we are obliged frequently to refer in discourse. Accordingly, they are subject to the same modifications with substantive nouns, of number, gender, and case. Only, with respect to gender, we may observe, that the pronouns of the first and second person, as they are called, *I* and *thou*, do not appear to have had the distinctions of gender given them in any language ; for this plain reason, that,

* “ The various terminations of the same word, whether verb or noun, are always conceived to be more intimately connected with the term which they serve to lengthen, than the additional, detached, and in themselves insignificant particles, which we are obliged to employ as connectives to our significant words. Our method gives almost the same exposure to the one as to the other, making the significant parts, and the insignificant, equally conspicuous ; theirs, much oftener sinks, as it were, the former into the latter, at once preserving their use, and hiding their weakness. Our modern languages may, in this respect, be compared to the art of the carpenter in its rudest state ; when the union of the materials, employed by the artisan, could be effected only by the help of those external and coarse implements, pins, nails, and cramps. The ancient languages resemble the same art in its most improved state, after the invention of dovetail joints, grooves, and mortices ; when thus all the principal junctions are effected, by forming, properly, the extremities, or terminations, of the pieces to be joined. For, by means of these, the union of the parts is rendered closer ; while that by which that union is produced, is scarcely perceivable.” The philosophy of rhetoric, by dr. Campbell, vol. ii. p. 412.

as they always refer to persons who are present to each other when they speak, their sex must appear, and therefore needs not be marked by a masculine or feminine pronoun. But, as the third person may be absent, or unknown, the distinction of gender there becomes necessary; and accordingly in English, it hath all the three genders belonging to it; *he, she, it*. As to cases; even those languages which have dropped them in substantive nouns, sometimes retain more of them in pronouns, for the sake of the greater readiness in expressing relations; as pronouns are words of such frequent occurrence in discourse. In English, most of our grammarians hold the personal pronouns to have two cases, besides the nominative; a genitive, and an accusative: *I, mine, me*;—*thou, thine, thee*;—*he, his, him*;—*who, whose, whom*.

In the first stage of speech, it is probable that the places of those pronouns were supplied by pointing to the object when present, and naming it when absent. For one can hardly think, that pronouns were of early invention; as they are words of such a particular and artificial nature. *I, thou, he, it*, it is to be observed, are not names peculiar to any single object, but so very general, that they may be applied to all persons, or objects, whatever, in certain circumstances. *It*, is the most general term that can possibly be conceived, as it may stand for any one thing in the universe of which we speak. At the same time, these pronouns have this quality, that, in the circumstances in which they are applied, they never denote more than one precise individual; which they ascertain, and specify, much in the same manner as is done by the article. So that pronouns are, at once, the most general, and the most particular words in language. They are commonly the most irregular and troublesome words to the learner, in the grammar of all tongues; as being

the words most in common use, and subjected thereby to the greatest varieties.

Adjectives, or terms of quality, such as, *great, little, black, white, yours, ours*, are the plainest and simplest of all that class of words which are termed attributive. They are found in all languages; and, in all languages, must have been very early invented; as objects could not be distinguished from one another, nor any intercourse be carried on concerning them, till once names were given to their different qualities.

I have nothing to observe in relation to them, except that singularity which attends them in the Greek and Latin, of having the same form given them with substantive nouns; being declined, like them, by cases, and subjected to the like distinctions of number and gender. Hence it has happened, that grammarians have made them to belong to the same part of speech, and divided the noun into substantive and adjective; an arrangement founded more on attention to the external form of words, than to their nature and force. For adjectives, or terms of quality, have not, by their nature, the least resemblance to substantive nouns; as they never express anything which can possibly subsist by itself; which is the very essence of the substantive noun. They are, indeed, more akin to verbs, which, like them, express the attribute of some substance.

It may, at first view, appear somewhat odd and fantastic, that adjectives should in the ancient languages, have assumed so much the form of substantives; since neither number, nor gender, nor cases, nor relations, have any thing to do in a proper sense, with mere qualities, such as, *good or great, soft or hard*. And yet *bonus*, and *magnus*, and *tener*, have their singular and plural, their masculine and feminine, their genitives and datives, like any of the names of substances, or persons. But this can

be accounted for, from the genius of those tongues. They avoided, as much as possible, considering qualities separately, or in the abstract. They made them a part, or appendage of the substance which they served to distinguish; they made the adjective depend on its substantive, and resemble it in termination, in number, and gender, in order that the two might coalesce the more intimately, and be joined in the form of expression, as they were in the nature of things. The liberty of transposition, too, which those languages indulged, required such a method as this to be followed. For, allowing the related words of a sentence to be placed at a distance from each other, it required the relation of adjectives to their proper substantives to be pointed out, by such similar circumstances of form and termination, as, according to the grammatical style, should show their concordance. When I say, in English, the "beautiful wife of a brave man," the juxtaposition of the words prevents all ambiguity. "But when I say, in Latin, "*Formosa fortis viri uxor*;" it is only the agreement, in gender, number, and case, of the adjective "*formosa*," which is the first word of the sentence, with the substantive "*uxor*," which is the last word, that declares the meaning.

LECTURE IX.

STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE. ENGLISH TONGUE.

OF the whole class of words that are called attributive, indeed, of all the parts of speech, the most complex, by far, is the verb. It is chiefly in this part of speech, that the subtle and profound metaphysic of language appears ; and, therefore, in examining the nature and different variations of the verb, there might be room for ample discussion. But as I am sensible that such grammatical discussions, when they are pursued far, become intricate and obscure, I shall avoid dwelling any longer on this subject, than seems absolutely necessary.

The verb is so far of the same nature with the adjective, that it expresses, like it, an attribute, or property, of some person or thing. But it does more than this. For, in all verbs, in every language, there are no less than three things implied at once ; the attribute of some substantive, an affirmation concerning that attribute, and time. Thus, when I say, “ the sun shineth ; ” shining, is the attribute ascribed to the sun ; the present time is marked ; and an affirmation is included, that this property of shining belongs, at that time, to the sun. The

participle, "shining," is merely an adjective, which denotes an attribute, or property, and also expresses time ; but carries no affirmation. The infinitive mood, "to shine," may be called the name of the verb ; it carries neither time nor affirmation, but simply expresses that attribute, action, or state of things, which is to be the subject of the other moods and tenses. Hence the infinitive often carries the resemblance of a substantive noun ; and, both in English and Latin, is sometimes constructed as such. As, "scire tuum nihil est." "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori." And, in English, in the same manner : "to write well is difficult ; to speak eloquently is still more difficult." But as, through all the other tenses and moods, the affirmation runs, and is essential to them ; "the sun shineth, was shining, shone, will shine, would have shone," &c. the affirmation seems to be that which chiefly distinguishes the verb from the other parts of speech, and gives it its most conspicuous power. Hence there can be no sentence, or complete proposition, without a verb either expressed or implied. For, whenever we speak, we always mean to assert, that something is, or is not ; and the word, which carries this assertion, or affirmation, is a verb. From this sort of eminence belonging to it, this part of speech hath received its name, verb, from the Latin, *verbum*, or *the word*, by way of distinction.

Verbs, therefore, from their importance and necessity in speech, must have been coeval with men's first attempts towards the formation of language : though, indeed, it must have been the work of long time, to rear them up to that accurate and complex structure which they now possess. It seems very probable, as dr. Smith hath suggested, that the radical verb, or the first form of it, in most languages, would be, what we now call the impersonal verb. "It rains ; it thunders ; it is light ; it

“is agreeable;” and the like; as this is the very simplest form of the verb, and merely affirms the existence of an event, or of a state of things. By degrees, after pronouns were invented, such verbs became personal, and were branched out into all the variety of tenses and moods.

The tenses of the verb are contrived to imply the several distinctions of time. Of these I must take some notice, in order to show the admirable accuracy with which language is constructed. We think commonly, of no more than the three great divisions of time, into the past, the present, and the future: and we might imagine, that if verbs had been so contrived, as simply to express these, no more was needful. But language proceeds with much greater subtilty. It splits time into its several moments. It considers time as never standing still, but always flowing; things past, as more or less perfectly completed; and things future, as more or less remote, by different gradations. Hence the great variety of tenses in most tongues.

The present may, indeed, be always considered as one indivisible point, susceptible of no variety. “I write, or I am writing; *scribo*.” But it is not so with the past. There is no language so poor, but it hath two or three tenses to express the varieties of it. Ours hath no fewer than four. 1. A past action may be considered as left unfinished; which makes the imperfect tense, “I was writing; *scribebam*.” 2. As just now finished. This makes the proper perfect tense, which in English, is always expressed by the help of the auxiliary verb, “I have written.” 3. It may be considered as finished some time ago; the particular time left indefinite. “I wrote; *scripsi*”; which may either signify, “I wrote yesterday, or I wrote a twelvemonth ago.” This is what grammarians call an aorist, or indefinite past. 4. It may be considered as finished before

something else, which is also past. This is the plusquamperfect. "I had written; *scripseram*. I had "written before I received his letter."

Here we observe, with some pleasure, that we have an advantage over the Latins, who have only three varieties upon the past time. They have no proper perfect tense, or one which distinguishes an action just now finished, from an action that was finished some time ago. In both these cases, "they must say, *scripsi*." Though there be a manifest difference in the tenses, which our language expresses by this variation, "I have written," meaning, I have just now finished writing; and, "I wrote," meaning at some former time, since which, other things have intervened. This difference the Romans have no tense to express; and, therefore, can only do it by a circumlocution.

The chief varieties in the future time are two; a simple or indefinite future: "I shall write; *scribam*:" and a future, relating to something else, which is also future. "I shall have written; *scripsero*." I shall have written before he arrives*.

Besides tenses, or the power of expressing time, verbs admit the distinction of voices, as they are called, the active and the passive; according as the affirmation respects something that is done, or something that is suffered; "I love, or I am loved." They admit also the distinction of moods, which are designed to express the affirmation, whether active or passive, under different forms. The indicative mood, for instance, simply declares a proposition; "I write; I have written:" the imperative requires, commands, threatens; "write thou; let him write." The subjunctive expresses the pro-

* On the tenses of verbs, Mr. Harris's *Hermes* may be consulted, by such as desire to see them scrutinized with metaphysical accuracy; and also, the treatise on the origin and progress of language, vol. ii. p. 125.

position under the form of a condition or in subordination to some other thing, to which a reference is made, "I might write, I could write, I should write, if the case were so and so." This manner of expressing an affirmation, under so many different forms, together also with the distinction of the three persons, *I*, *thou*, and *he*, constitutes what is called, the conjugation of verbs, which makes so great a part of the grammar of all languages.

It now clearly appears, as I before observed, that, of all the parts of speech, verbs are, by far, the most artificial and complex. Consider only, how many things are denoted by this single Latin word, "*amavisssem*, I would have loved." First, the person who speaks, "I." Secondly, an attribute, or action of that person, "loving." Thirdly, an affirmation concerning that action. Fourthly, the past time denoted in that affirmation, "have loved:" and fifthly, a condition on which the action is suspended, "would have loved." It appears curious and remarkable, that words of this complex import, and with more or less of this artificial structure, are to be found, as far as we know, in all languages of the world.

Indeed, the form of conjugation, or the manner of expressing all these varieties in the verb, differs greatly in different tongues. Conjugation is esteemed most perfect in those languages, which, by varying either the termination or the initial syllable of the verb, express the greatest number of important circumstances, without the help of auxiliary words. In the oriental tongues, the verbs are said to have few tenses, or expressions of time; but then their moods are so contrived, as to express a great variety of circumstances and relations. In the Hebrew, for instance, they say, in one word, without the help of any auxiliary, not only "I have taught," but, "I have taught exactly, or often; I have been

“commanded to teach ; I have taught myself.” The Greek, which is the most perfect of all the known tongues, is very regular and complete in all the tenses and moods. The Latin is formed on the same model, but more imperfect ; especially in the passive voice, which forms most of the tenses by the help of the auxiliary verb, “*sum*.”

In all the modern European tongues, conjugation is very defective. They admit few varieties in the termination of the verb itself ; but have almost constant recourse to their auxiliary verbs, throughout all the moods and tenses, both active and passive. Language has undergone a change in conjugation, perfectly similar to that, which, I showed in the last lecture, it underwent with respect to declension. As prepositions, prefixed to the noun, superseded the use of cases ; so the two great auxiliary verbs, to *have*, and to *be*, with those other auxiliaries which we use in English, *do*, *shall*, *will*, *may*, and *can*, prefixed to the participle, supersede, in a great measure, the different terminations of moods and tenses, which formed the ancient conjugations.

The alteration, in both cases, was owing to the same cause, and will be easily understood, from reflecting on what was formerly observed. The auxiliary verbs are, like prepositions, words of a very general and abstract nature. They imply the different modifications of simple existence, considered alone, and without reference to any particular thing. In the early state of speech, the import of them would be incorporated with every particular verb in its tenses and moods, long before words were invented for denoting such abstract conceptions of existence, alone, and by themselves. But after those auxiliary verbs came, in the progress of language, to be invented and known, and to have tenses and moods given to them like other

verbs ; it was found, that as they carried in their nature the force of that affirmation which distinguishes the verb, they might, by being joined with the participle which gives the meaning of the verb, supply the place of most of the moods and tenses. Hence, as the modern tongues began to rise out of the ruins of the ancient, this method established itself in the new formation of speech. Such words, for instance ; as, *am, was, have, shall*, being once familiar, it appeared more easy to apply these to any verb whatever ; as, *I am loved ; I was loved ; I have loved* ; than to remember that variety of terminations which were requisite in conjugating the ancient verbs, *amor, amabar, amavi, &c.* Two or three varieties only, in the termination of the verb, were retained, as, *love, loved, loving* ; and all the rest were dropt. The consequence, however, of this practice, was the same as that of abolishing declensions. It rendered language more simple and easy in its structure ; but withal, more prolix, and less graceful. This finishes all that seemed most necessary to be observed with respect to verbs.

The remaining parts of speech, which are called the indeclinable parts, or that admit of no variations, will not detain us long.

Adverbs are the first that occur. These form a very numerous class of words in every language, reducible, in general, to the head of attributives ; as they serve to modify, or to denote some circumstance of an action, or of a quality, relative to its time, place, order, degree, and the other properties of it, which we have occasion to specify. They are, for the most part, no more than an abridged mode of speech, expressing, by one word, what might, by a circumlocution, be resolved into two or more words belonging to the other parts of speech. “ Exceedingly,” for instance, is the same as, “ in a high degree ;” “ bravely,” the same as,

“with bravery or valour ;” “ here,” the same as, “ in this place ;” “ often, and seldom,” the same as, “ for many, and for few times :” and so of the rest. Hence, adverbs may be conceived as of less necessity, and of later introduction into the system of speech, than many other classes of words ; and, accordingly, the great body of them are derived from other words formerly established in the language.

Prepositions and conjunctions are words more essential to discourse than the greatest part of adverbs. They form that class of words, called connectives, without which there could be no language ; serving to express the relations which things bear to one another, their mutual influence, dependencies, and coherence ; thereby joining words together into intelligible and significant propositions. Conjunctions are generally employed for connecting sentences, or members of sentences ; as, *and, because, although*, and the like. Prepositions are employed for connecting words, by showing the relation which one substantive noun bears to another ; as, *of, from, to, above, below*, &c. Of the force of these I had occasion to speak before, when treating of the cases and declensions of substantive nouns.

It is abundantly evident, that all these connective particles must be of the greatest use in speech ; seeing they point out the relations and transitions by which the mind passes from one idea to another. They are the foundation of all reasoning, which is no other thing than the connexion of thoughts. And, therefore, though among barbarous nations, and in the rude uncivilized ages of the world, the stock of these words might be small, it must always have increased, as mankind advanced in the arts of reasoning and reflexion. The more that any nation is improved by science, and the more perfect

their language becomes, we may naturally expect, that it will abound more with connective particles ; expressing relations of things, and transitions of thought, which had escaped a grosser view. Accordingly, no tongue is so full of them as the Greek, in consequence of the acute and subtle genius of that refined people. In every language, much of the beauty and strength of it depends on the proper use of conjunctions, prepositions, and those relative pronouns, which also serve the same purpose of connecting the different parts of discourse. It is the right or wrong management of these, which chiefly makes discourse appear firm and compacted, or disjointed and loose ; which carries it on in its progress with a smooth and even pace, or renders its march irregular and desultory.

I shall dwell no longer on the general construction of language. Allow me, only, before I dismiss the subject, to observe, that dry and intricate as it may seem to some, it is, however, of great importance, and very nearly connected with the philosophy of the human mind. For, if speech be the vehicle, or interpreter of the conceptions of our minds, an examination of its structure and progress cannot but unfold many things concerning the nature and progress of our conceptions themselves, and the operations of our faculties ; a subject that is always instructive to man. “ Nequis,” says Quintilian, an author of excellent judgment, “ nequis tanquam
 “ parva fastidiat grammatices elementa. Non quia
 “ magnæ sit operæ consonantes a vocalibus discernere,
 “ easque in semivocalium numerum, mutarumque
 “ partiri, sed quia interiora velut sacri hujus
 “ adeuntibus, apparebit multa rerum subtilitas, quæ
 “ non modo acuerè ingenia puerilia, sed exercere
 “ altissimam quoque eruditionem ac scientiam
 “ possit*.” I. 4.

* “ Let no man despise, as inconsiderable, the elements of

Let us now come nearer to our own language. In this, and the preceding lecture, some observations have already been made on its structure. But it is proper that we should be a little more particular in the examination of it.

The language which is, at present, spoken throughout Great Britain, is neither the ancient primitive speech of the island, nor derived from it ; but is altogether of foreign origin. The language of the first inhabitants of our island, beyond doubt, was the Celtic, or Gaelic, common to them with Gaul ; from which country, it appears, by many circumstances, that Great Britain was peopled. This Celtic tongue, which is said to be very expressive and copious, and is, probably, one of the most ancient languages in the world, obtained once in most of the western regions of Europe. It was the language of Gaul, of Great Britain, of Ireland, and, very probably, of Spain also ; till, in the course of those revolutions, which, by means of the conquests, first, of the Romans, and afterwards, of the northern nations, changed the government, speech, and, in a manner, the whole face of Europe, this tongue was gradually obliterated ; and now subsists only in the mountains of Wales, in the Highlands of Scotland, and among the wild Irish. For the Irish, the Welch, and the Erse, are no other than different dialects of the same tongue, the ancient Celtic.

This, then, was the language of the primitive Britons, the first inhabitants, that we know of, in

grammar, because it may seem to him a matter of small consequence, to show the distinction between vowels and consonants, and to divide the latter into liquids and mutes. But they who penetrate into the innermost parts of this temple of science, will there discover such refinement and subtilty of matter, as is not only proper to sharpen the understandings of young men, but sufficient to give exercise for the most profound knowledge and erudition."

our island ; and continued so till the arrival of the Saxons in England, in the year of our Lord 450 ; who, having conquered the Britons, did not intermix with them, but expelled them from their habitations, and drove them, together with their language, into the mountains of Wales. The Saxons were one of those northern nations that over-ran Europe ; and their tongue, a dialect of the Gothic or Teutonic, altogether distinct from the Celtic, laid the foundation of the present English tongue. With some intermixture of Danish, a language, probably, from the same root with the Saxon, it continued to be spoken throughout the southern part of the island, till the time of William the conqueror. He introduced his Norman or French, as the language of the court, which made a considerable change in the speech of the nation ; and the English which was spoken afterwards, and continues to be spoken now, is a mixture of the ancient Saxon, and this Norman French, together with such new and foreign words as commerce and learning have, in progress of time, gradually introduced.

The history of the English language can, in this manner, be clearly traced. The language spoken in the low countries of Scotland, is now, and has been for many centuries, no other than a dialect of the English. How, indeed, or by what steps, the ancient Celtic tongue came to be banished from the low country in Scotland, and to make its retreat into the Highlands and islands, cannot be so well pointed out, as how the like revolution was brought about in England. Whether the southernmost part of Scotland was once subject to the Saxons, and formed a part of the kingdom of Northumberland — or, whether the great number of English exiles that retreated into Scotland, upon the Norman conquest, and upon other occasions, introduced to that country their own language, which after-

wards, by the mutual intercourse of the two nations, prevailed over the Celtic, are uncertain and contested points, the discussion of which would lead us too far from our subject.

From what has been said, it appears, that the Teutonic dialect is the basis of our present speech. It has been imported among us in three different forms, the Saxon, the Danish, and the Norman; all which have mingled together in our language. A very great number of our words, too, are plainly derived from the Latin. These, we had not directly from the Latin, but most of them, it is probable, entered into our tongue through the channel of that Norman French, which William the conqueror introduced. For, as the Romans had long been in full possession of Gaul, the language spoken in that country, when it was invaded by the Franks and Normans, was a sort of corrupted Latin, mingled with Celtic, to which was given the name of Romanse: and as the Franks and Normans did not, like the Saxons in England, expel the inhabitants, but, after their victories, mingled with them; the language of the country became a compound of the Teutonic dialect imported by these conquerors, and of the former corrupted Latin. Hence, the French language has always continued to have a very considerable affinity with the Latin; and hence, a great number of words of Latin origin, which were in use among the Normans in France, were introduced into our tongue at the conquest; to which, indeed, many have since been added, directly from the Latin, in consequence of the great diffusion of Roman literature throughout all Europe.

From the influx of so many streams, from the union of so many dissimilar parts, it naturally flows, that the English, like every compounded language, must needs be somewhat irregular. We

cannot expect from it that correspondence of parts, that complete analogy in structure, which may be found in those simpler languages, which have been formed, in a manner, within themselves, and built on one foundation. Hence, as I before showed, it has but small remains of conjugation or declension; and its syntax is narrow; as there are few marks in the words themselves that can show their relation to each other, or, in the grammatical style, point out either their concordance, or their government, in the sentence. Our words having been brought to us from several different regions, straggle, if we may so speak, asunder from each other; and do not coalesce so naturally in the structure of a sentence, as the words in the Greek and Roman tongues.

But these disadvantages, if they be such, of a compound language, are balanced by other advantages that attend it; particularly, by the number and variety of words with which such a language is likely to be enriched. Few languages are, in fact, more copious, than the English. In all grave subjects especially, historical, critical, political, and moral, no writer has the least reason to complain of the barrenness of our tongue. The studious reflecting genius of the people, has brought together great store of expressions, on such subjects, from every quarter. We are rich too in the language of poetry. Our poetical style differs widely from prose, not in point of numbers only, but in the very words themselves; which shows what a stock and compass of words we have it in our power to select and employ, suited to those different occasions. Herein we are infinitely superior to the French, whose poetical language, if it were not distinguished by rhyme, would not be known to differ from their ordinary prose.

It is chiefly, indeed, on grave subjects, and with

respect to the stronger emotions of the mind, that our language displays its power of expression. We are said to have thirty words, at least, for denoting all the varieties of the passion of anger*. But, in describing the more delicate sentiments and emotions, our tongue is not so fertile. It must be confessed, that the French language far surpasses ours, in expressing the nicer shades of character ; especially those varieties of manner, temper, and behaviour, which are displayed in our social intercourse with one another. Let any one attempt to translate, into English, only a few pages of one of Marivaux's novels, and he will soon be sensible of our deficiency of expression on these subjects. Indeed, no language is so copious as the French for whatever is delicate, gay, and amusing. It is, perhaps, the happiest language for conversation in the known world ; but, on the higher subjects of composition, the English may be justly esteemed to excel it considerably.

Language is generally understood to receive its predominant tincture from the national character of the people who speak it. We must not, indeed, expect, that it will carry an exact and full impression of their genius and manners ; for, among all nations, the original stock of words which they received from their ancestors, remains as the foundation of their speech throughout many ages, while their manners undergo, perhaps, very great alterations. National character will, however, always have some perceptible influence on the turn of language ; and the gaiety and vivacity of the French, and the gravity and thoughtfulness of the English, are sufficiently impressed on their respective tongues.

* Anger, wrath, passion, rage, fury, outrage, fierceness, sharpness, animosity, choler, resentment, heat, heartburning ; to fume, storm, inflame, be incensed ; to vex, kindle, irritate, enrage, exasperate, provoke, fret ; to be fullen, hasty, hot, rough, sour, peevish, &c. Preface to Greenwood's grammar.

From the genius of our language, and the character of those who speak it, it may be expected to have strength and energy. It is, indeed, naturally prolix; owing to the great number of particles and auxiliary verbs which we are obliged constantly to employ; and this prolixity must, in some degree, enfeeble it. We seldom can express so much by one word as was done by the verbs, and by the nouns, in the Greek and Roman languages. Our style is less compact; our conceptions being spread out among more words, and split, as it were, into more parts, make a fainter impression when we utter them. Notwithstanding this defect, by our abounding in terms for expressing all the strong emotions of the mind, and by the liberty which we enjoy, in a greater degree than most nations, of compounding words, our language may be esteemed to possess considerable force of expression; comparatively, at least, with the other modern tongues, though much below the ancient. The style of Milton alone, both in poetry and prose, is a sufficient proof, that the English tongue is far from being destitute of nerve and energy.

The flexibility of a language, or its power of accommodation to different styles and manners, so as to be either grave and strong, or easy and flowing, or tender and gentle, or pompous and magnificent, as occasions require, or as an author's genius prompts, is a quality, of great importance in speaking and writing. It seems to depend upon three things; the copiousness of a language; the different arrangements of which its words are susceptible; and the variety and beauty of the sound of those words, so as to correspond to many different subjects. Never did any tongue possess this quality so eminently as the Greek, which every writer of genius could so mould, as to make the style perfectly expressive of his own manner and peculiar turn.

It had all the three requisites, which I have mentioned, as necessary for this purpose. It joined to these the graceful variety of its different dialects; and thereby readily assumed every sort of character which an author could wish, from the most simple and most familiar, up to the most majestic. The Latin, though a very beautiful language, is inferior, in this respect, to the Greek. It has more of a fixed character of stateliness and gravity. It is always firm and masculine in the tenor of its sound; and is supported by a certain senatorial dignity, of which it is difficult for a writer to divest it wholly, on any occasion. Among the modern tongues, the Italian possesses a great deal more of this flexibility than the French. By its copiousness, its freedom of arrangement, and the great beauty and harmony of its sounds, it suits itself very happily to most subjects, either in prose or in poetry; is capable of the august and the strong, as well as the tender; and seems to be, on the whole, the most perfect of all the modern dialects which have arisen out of the ruins of the ancient. Our own language, though not equal to the Italian in flexibility, yet is not destitute of a considerable degree of this quality. If any one will consider the diversity of style which appears in some of our classics; that great difference of manner, for instance, which is marked by the style of lord Shaftesbury, and that of dean Swift; he will see, in our tongue, such a circle of expression, such a power of accommodation to the different taste of writers, as redounds not a little to its honour.

What the English has been most taxed with, is its deficiency in harmony of sound. But though every native is apt to be partial to the sounds of his own language, and may, therefore, be suspected of not being a fair judge in this point; yet, I imagine, there are evident grounds on which it may be

shown, that this charge against our tongue has been carried too far. The melody of our versification, its power of supporting poetical numbers, without any assistance from rhyme, is alone a sufficient proof that our language is far from being unmusical. Our verse is, after the Italian, the most diversified and harmonious of any of the modern dialects; unquestionably far beyond the French verse, in variety, sweetness, and melody. Mr. Sheridan has shown, in his lectures, that we abound more in vowel and diphthong sounds, than most languages; and these, too, so divided into long and short, as to afford a proper diversity in the quantity of our syllables. Our consonants, he observes, which appear so crowded to the eye on paper, often form combinations, not disagreeable to the ear in pronouncing; and in particular, the objection which has been made to the frequent recurrence of the hissing consonant *s* in our language, is unjust and ill-founded. For, it has not been attended to, that very commonly, and in the final syllables especially, this letter loses altogether the hissing sound, and is transformed into a *z*, which is one of the sounds on which the ear rests with pleasure; as in *has, these, those, loves, hears*, and innumerable more, where, though the letter *s* be retained in writing, it has really the power of *z*, not of the common *s*.

After all, however, it must be admitted, that smoothness, or beauty of sound, is not one of the distinguishing properties of the English tongue. Though not incapable of being formed into melodious arrangements, yet strength and expressiveness, more than grace, form its character. We incline, in general, to a short pronunciation of our words, and have shortened the quantity of most of those which we borrow from the Latin, as *orator, spectacle, theatre, liberty*, and such like. Agreeable to this, is a remarkable peculiarity of English pronun-

ciation, the throwing the accent farther back, that is, nearer the beginning of the word, than is done by any other nation. In Greek and Latin, no word is accented farther back than the third syllable from the end, or what is called the antepenult. But, in English, we have many words accented on the fourth, some on the fifth syllable from the end, as *memorable, conveniency, ambulatory, profitableness*. The general effect of this practice of hastening the accent, or placing it so near the beginning of a word, is to give a brisk and a spirited, but at the same time a rapid and hurried, and not very musical, tone to the whole pronunciation of a people.

The English tongue possesses, undoubtedly, this property, that it is the most simple in its form and construction, of all the European dialects. It is free from all intricacy of cases, declensions, moods, and tenses. Its words are subject to fewer variations from their original form, than those of any other language. Its substantives have no distinction of gender, except what nature has made, and but one variation in case. Its adjectives admit of no change at all, except what expresses the degree of comparison. Its verbs, instead of running through all the varieties of ancient conjugation, suffer no more than four or five changes in termination. By the help of a few prepositions and auxiliary verbs, all the purposes of significancy in meaning are accomplished; while the words, for the most part, preserve their form unchanged. The disadvantages in point of elegance, brevity, and force, which follow from this structure of our language, I have before pointed out. But, at the same time, it must be admitted, that such a structure contributes to facility. It renders the acquisition of our language less laborious, the arrangement of our words more plain and obvious, the rules of our syntax fewer and more simple.

I agree, indeed, with dr. Lowth (preface to Vol. I.

his grammar), in thinking that the simplicity and facility of our language occasion its being frequently written and spoken with less accuracy. It was necessary to study languages, which were of a more complex and artificial form, with greater care. The marks of gender and case, the varieties of conjugation and declension, the multiplied rules of syntax, were all to be attended to in speech. Hence language became more an object of art. It was reduced into form ; a standard was established ; and any departures from the standard became conspicuous. Whereas, among us, language is hardly considered as an object of grammatical rule. We take it for granted, that a competent skill in it may be acquired without any study ; and that, in a syntax so narrow and confined as ours, there is nothing which demands attention. Hence arises the habit of writing in a loose and inaccurate manner.

I admit that no grammatical rules have sufficient authority to controul the firm and established usage of language. Established custom, in speaking and writing, is the standard to which we must at last resort for determining every controverted point in language and style. But it will not follow from this, that grammatical rules are superseded as useless. In every language, which has been in any degree cultivated, there prevails a certain structure and analogy of parts, which is understood to give foundation to the most reputable usage of speech ; and which, in all cases, when usage is loose or dubious, possesses considerable authority. In every language, there are rules of syntax which must be inviolably observed, by all who would either write or speak with any propriety. For syntax is no other than that arrangement of words, in a sentence, which renders the meaning of each word, and the relation of all the words to one another the most clear and intelligible.

• All the rules of Latin syntax, it is true, cannot

be applied to our language. Many of these rules arose from the particular form of their language, which occasioned verbs or prepositions to govern, some the genitive, some the dative, some the accusative or ablative case. But, abstracting from these peculiarities, it is to be always remembered, that the chief and fundamental rules of syntax are common to the English as well as the Latin tongue; and indeed, belong equally to all languages. For, in all languages, the parts which compose speech are essentially the same; substantives, adjectives, verbs, and connecting particles: and wherever these parts of speech are found, there are certain necessary relations among them, which regulate their syntax, or the place which they ought to possess in a sentence. Thus, in English, just as much as in Latin, the adjective must, by position, be made to agree with its substantive; and the verb must agree with its nominative in person and number; because, from the nature of things, a word, which expresses either a quality or an action, must correspond as closely as possible with the name of that thing whose quality, or whose action, it expresses. Two or more substantives, joined by a copulative, must always require the verbs or pronouns to which they refer, to be placed in the plural number; otherwise, their common relation to these verbs or pronouns is not pointed out. An active verb must, in every language, govern the accusative; that is, clearly point out some substantive noun, as the object to which its action is directed. A relative pronoun must, in every form of speech, agree with its antecedent in gender, number, and person; and conjunctions, or connecting particles, ought always to couple like cases and moods; that is, ought to join words which are of the same form and state with each other. I mention these as a few exemplifications of that fundamental regard to syntax, which, even in such a lan-

guage as ours, is absolutely requisite for writing or speaking with any propriety.

Whatever the advantages, or defects of the English language be, as it is our own language, it deserves a high degree of our study and attention; both with regard to the choice of words which we employ, and with regard to the syntax, or the arrangement of these words in a sentence. We know how much the Greeks and the Romans in their most polished and flourishing times, cultivated their own tongues. We know how much study both the French and the Italians have bestowed upon theirs. Whatever knowledge may be acquired by the study of other languages, it can never be communicated with advantage, unless by such as can write and speak their own language well. Let the matter of an author be ever so good and useful, his compositions will always suffer in the public esteem, if his expression be deficient in purity and propriety. At the same time, the attainment of a correct and elegant style is an object which demands application and labour. If any imagine they can catch it merely by the ear, or acquire it by a slight perusal of some of our good authors, they will find themselves much disappointed. The many errors, even in point of grammar, the many offences against purity of language, which are committed by writers who are far from being contemptible, demonstrate, that a careful study of the language is previously requisite, in all who aim at writing it properly*.

* On this subject, the reader ought to peruse dr. Lowth's short introduction to English grammar, with critical notes: which is the grammatical performance of highest authority that has appeared in our time, and in which he will see, what I have said concerning the inaccuracies in language of some of our best writers, fully verified. In dr. Campbell's philosophy of rhetoric, he will likewise find many acute and ingenious observations, both on the English language, and on style in general. And dr. Priestley's rudiments of English grammar will also be useful, by pointing out several of the errors into which writers are apt to fall.

LECTURE X.

STYLE—PERSPICUITY AND PRECISION.

HAVING finished the subject of language, I now enter on the consideration of style, and the rules that relate to it.

It is not easy to give a precise idea of what is meant by style. The best definition I can give of it is, the peculiar manner in which a man expresses his conceptions, by means of language. It is different from mere language or words. The words, which an author employs, may be proper and faultless : and his style may, nevertheless, have great faults ; it may be dry, or stiff, or feeble, or affected. Style has always some reference to an author's manner of thinking. It is a picture of the ideas which rise in his mind, and of the manner in which they rise there ; and, hence, when we are examining an author's composition, it is, in many cases, extremely difficult to separate the style from the sentiment. No wonder these two should be so intimately connected, as style is nothing else, than that sort of expression which our thoughts most

readily assume. Hence, different countries have been noted for peculiarities of style, suited to their different temper and genius. The eastern nations animated their style with the most strong and hyperbolical figures. The Athenians, a polished and acute people, formed a style accurate, clear, and neat. The Asiatics, gay and loose in their manners, affected a style florid and diffuse. The like sort of characteristical differences are commonly remarked in the style of the French, the English, and the Spaniards. In giving the general characters of style, it is usual to talk of a nervous, a feeble, or a spirited style; which are plainly the characters of a writer's manner of thinking, as well as of expressing himself: so difficult it is to separate these two things from one another. Of the general characters of style, I am afterwards to discourse; but it will be necessary to begin with examining the more simple qualities of it, from the assemblage of which, its more complex denominations, in a great measure, result.

All the qualities of a good style may be ranged under two heads, perspicuity and ornament. For all that can possibly be required of language, is, to convey our ideas clearly to the minds of others, and, at the same time, in such a dress, as by pleasing and interesting them, shall most effectually strengthen the impressions which we seek to make. When both these ends are answered, we certainly accomplish every purpose for which we use writing and discourse.

Perspicuity, it will be readily admitted, is the fundamental quality of style*; a quality so essential in every kind of writing, that, for the want of it, nothing can atone. Without this, the richest

* "Nobis prima sit virtus, perspicuitas, propria verba, rectus ordo, non in longam dilata conclusio; nihil neque desit, neque superfluat."

ornaments of style only glimmer through the dark ; and puzzle, instead of pleasing the reader. This, therefore, must be our first object, to make our meaning clearly and fully understood, and understood without the least difficulty. “*Oratio*,” says Quintilian, “*debet negligenter quoque audientibus esse aperta ; ut in animum audientis, sicut sol in oculos, etiamsi in eum non intendatur, occurrat. Quare, non solum ut intelligere possit, sed ne omnino possit non intelligere, curandum.*” If we are obliged to follow a writer with much care, to pause, and to read over his sentences a second time, in order to comprehend them fully, he will never please us long. Mankind are too indolent to relish so much labour. They may pretend to admire the author’s depth, after they have discovered his meaning ; but they will seldom be inclined to take up his work a second time.

Authors sometimes plead the difficulty of their subject, as an excuse for the want of perspicuity. But the excuse can rarely, if ever, be admitted. For whatever a man conceives clearly, that it is in his power, if he will be at the trouble, to put into distinct propositions, or to express clearly to others : and upon no subject ought any man to write, where he cannot think clearly. His ideas, indeed, may, very excusably, be on some subjects incomplete or inadequate ; but still, as far as they go, they ought to be clear ; and, wherever this is the case, perspicuity, in expressing them, is always attainable. The obscurity which reigns so much among many metaphysical writers, is, for most part, owing to the

† “ Discourse ought always to be obvious, even to the most careless and negligent hearer ; so that the sense shall strike his mind, as the light of the sun does our eyes, though they are not directed upwards to it. We must study, not only that every hearer may understand us, but that it shall be impossible for him not to understand us.”

Indistinctness of their own conceptions. They see the object but in a confused light ; and, of course, can never exhibit it in a clear one to others.

Perspicuity in writing, is not to be considered as merely a sort of negative virtue, or freedom from defect. It has higher merit : it is a degree of positive beauty. We are pleased with an author, we consider him as deserving praise, who frees us from all fatigue of searching for his meaning ; who carries us through his subject without any embarrassment or confusion ; whose style flows always like a limpid stream, where we see to the very bottom.

The study of perspicuity requires attention, first, to single words and phrases, and then to the construction of sentences. I begin with treating of the first, and shall confine myself to it in this lecture.

Perspicuity, considered with respect to words and phrases, requires these three qualities in them, *purity, propriety, and precision.*

Purity and propriety of language are often used indiscriminately for each other ; and, indeed, they are very nearly allied. A distinction, however, obtains between them. Purity is the use of such words, and such constructions, as belong to the idiom of the language which we speak ; in opposition to words and phrases that are imported from other languages, or that are obsolete, or new-coined, or used without proper authority. Propriety is the selection of such words in the language, as the best and most established usage has appropriated to those ideas which we intend to express by them. It implies the correct and happy application of them, according to that usage, in opposition to vulgarisms, or low expressions ; and to words and phrases, which would be less significant of the ideas that we mean to convey. Style may be pure, that is, it may all be strictly English, without Scotticisms or Gallicisms, or ungrammatical irregular expressions of any

kind, and may, nevertheless, be deficient in propriety. The words may be ill chosen ; not adapted to the subject, nor fully expressive of the author's sense. He has taken all his words and phrases from the general mass of English language ; but he has made his selection among these words unhappily. Whereas, style cannot be proper without being also pure ; and where both purity and propriety meet, besides making style perspicuous, they also render it graceful. There is no standard, either of purity or of propriety, but the practice of the best writers and speakers in the country.

When I mentioned obsolete or new-coined words as incongruous with purity of style, it will be easily understood, that some exceptions are to be made. On certain occasions, they may have grace. Poetry admits of greater latitude than prose, with respect to coining, or, at least, new-compounding words ; yet, even here, this liberty should be used with a sparing hand. In prose, such innovations are more hazardous, and have a worse effect. They are apt to give style an affected and conceited air ; and should never be ventured upon, except by such, whose established reputation gives them some degree of dictatorial power over language.

The introduction of foreign and learned words, unless where necessity requires them, should always be avoided. Barren languages may need such assistances ; but ours is not one of these. Dean Swift, one of our most correct writers, valued himself much on using no words but such as were of native growth : and his language may, indeed, be considered as a standard of the strictest purity and propriety, in the choice of words. At present, we seem to be departing from this standard. A multitude of Latin words have, of late, been poured in upon us. On some occasions, they give an appearance of elevation and dignity to style. But often

also, they render it stiff and forced : and, in general, a plain native style, as it is more intelligible to all readers, so, by a proper management of words, it may be made equally strong and expressive with this Latinised English.

Let us now consider the import of precision in language, which, as it is the highest part of the quality denoted by perspicuity, merits a full explanation ; and the more, because distinct ideas are, perhaps, not commonly formed about it.

The exact import of precision may be drawn from the etymology of the word. It comes from “ *precidere*,” to cut off : it imports retrenching all superfluities, and pruning the expression so, as to exhibit neither more nor less than an exact copy of his idea who uses it. I observed before, that it is often difficult to separate the qualities of style from the qualities of thought ; and it is found so in this instance. For, in order to write with precision, though this be properly a quality of style, one must possess a very considerable degree of distinctness and accuracy in his manner of thinking.

The words, which a man uses to express his ideas, may be faulty in three respects : they may either not express that idea which the author intends, but some other which only resembles, or is akin to it ; or, they may express that idea, but not quite fully and completely ; or, they may express it, together with something more than he intends. Precision stands opposed to all these three faults ; but chiefly to the last. In an author’s writing with propriety, his being free from the two former faults seems implied. The words which he uses are proper ; that is, they express that idea which he intends, and they express it fully ; but to be precise, signifies, that they express that idea, and no more. There is nothing in his words which introduces any foreign idea, any superfluous unseasonable ac-

cessory, so as to mix it confusedly with the principal object, and thereby to render our conception of that object loose and indistinct. This requires a writer to have, himself, a very clear apprehension of the object he means to present to us ; to have laid fast hold of it in his mind ; and never to waver in any one view he takes of it : a perfection to which, indeed, few writers attain.

The use and importance of precision, may be deduced from the nature of the human mind. It never can view, clearly and distinctly, above one object at a time. If it must look at two or three together, especially objects among which there is resemblance or connexion, it finds itself confused and embarrassed. It cannot clearly perceive in what they agree, and in what they differ. Thus, were any object, suppose some animal, to be presented to me, of whose structure I wanted to form a distinct notion, I would desire all its trappings to be taken off, I would require it to be brought before me by itself, and to stand alone, that there might be nothing to distract my attention. The same is the case with words. If, when you would inform me of your meaning, you also tell me more than what conveys it ; if you join foreign circumstances to the principal object ; if by unnecessarily varying the expression, you shift the point of view, and make me see sometimes the object itself, and sometimes another thing that is connected with it ; you thereby oblige me to look on several objects at once, and I lose sight of the principal. You load the animal, you are showing me, with so many trappings and collars, and bring so many of the same species before me, somewhat resembling, and yet somewhat differing, that I see none of them clearly.

This forms what is called a loose style ; and is the

proper opposite to precision. It generally arises from using a superfluity of words. Feeble writers employ a multitude of words to make themselves understood, as they think, more distinctly ; and they only confound the reader. They are sensible of not having caught the precise expression, to convey what they would signify ; they do not, indeed, conceive their own meaning very precisely themselves ; and, therefore, help it out, as they can, by this and the other word, which may, as they suppose, supply the defect, and bring you somewhat nearer to their idea : they are always going about it, and about it, but never just hit the thing. The image, as they set it before you, is always seen double ; and no double image is distinct. When an author tells me of his hero's *courage* in the day of battle, the expression is precise, and I understand it fully. But if, from the desire of multiplying words, he will needs praise his *courage* and *fortitude* ; at the moment he joins these words together, my idea begins to waver. He means to express one quality more strongly ; but he is, in truth, expressing two. *Courage* resists danger ; *fortitude* supports pain. The occasion of exerting each of these qualities is different ; and being led to think of both together, when only one of them should be in my view, my view is rendered unsteady, and my conception of the object indistinct.

From what I have said, it appears that an author may, in a qualified sense, be perspicuous, whilst yet he is far from being precise. He uses proper words ; and proper arrangement ; he gives you the idea as clear as he conceives it himself ; and so far he is perspicuous : but the ideas are not very clear in his own mind ; they are loose and general ; and, therefore, cannot be expressed with precision. All subjects do not equally require precision. It is suff-

sight, on many occasions, that we have a general view of the meaning. The subject, perhaps, is of the known and familiar kind; and we are in no hazard of mistaking the sense of the author, though every word which he uses be not precise and exact.

Few authors, for instance, in the English language, are more clear and perspicuous, on the whole, than archbishop Tillotson, and sir William Temple; yet neither of them are remarkable for precision. They are loose and diffuse; and accustomed to express their meaning by several words, which show you fully whereabouts it lies, rather than to single out those expressions, which would convey clearly the idea they have in view, and no more. Neither, indeed, is precision the prevailing character of mr. Addison's style; although he is not so deficient in this respect as the other two authors.

Lord Shaftesbury's faults, in point of precision, are much greater than mr. Addison's; and the more unpardonable, because he is a professed philosophical writer; who, as such, ought, above all things, to have studied precision. His style has both great beauties and great faults; and, on the whole, is by no means a safe model for imitation. Lord Shaftesbury was well acquainted with the power of words; those which he employs are generally proper and well sounding; he has great variety of them; and his arrangement, as shall be afterwards shown, is commonly beautiful. His defect, in precision, is not owing so much to indistinct or confused ideas, as to perpetual affectation. He is fond, to excess, of the pomp and parade of language; he is never satisfied with expressing any thing clearly and simply; he must always give it the dress of state and majesty. Hence perpetual circumlocutions, and many words and phrases employed to describe somewhat, that would have

been described much better by one of them. If he has occasion to mention any person or author, he very rarely mentions him by his proper name. In the treatise, entitled, Advice to an author, he descants for two or three pages together upon Aristotle, without once naming him in any other way, than the master critic, the mighty genius and judge of art, the prince of critics, the grand master of art, and consummate philologist. In the same way, the grand poetic fire, the philosophical patriarch, and his disciple of noble birth, and lofty genius, are the only names by which he condescends to distinguish Homer, Socrates, and Plato, in another passage of the same treatise. This method of distinguishing persons is extremely affected; but it is not so contrary to precision, as the frequent circumlocutions he employs for all moral ideas; attentive, on every occasion, more to the pomp of language, than to the clearness which he ought to have studied as a philosopher. The moral sense, for instance, after he had once defined it, was a clear term; but, how vague becomes the idea, when, in the next page, he calls it, "that natural affection, and anticipating fancy, which makes the sense of right and wrong?" Self-examination, or reflexion on our own conduct, is an idea conceived with ease; but when it is wrought into all the forms of, "A man's dividing himself into two parties, becoming a self-dialogist, entering into partnership with himself, forming the dual number practically within himself;" we hardly know what to make of it. On some occasions, he so adorns, or rather loads with words, the plainest and simplest propositions, as, if not to obscure, at least, to enfeeble them.

In the following paragraph, for example, of the inquiry concerning virtue, he means to show, that, by every ill action we hurt our mind, as much as

one, who should swallow poison, or give himself a wound, would hurt his body. Observe what a redundancy of words he pours forth ; “ now, if the fabric of the mind or temper appeared to us, such as it really is ; if we saw it impossible to remove hence any one good or orderly affection, or to introduce any ill or disorderly one, without drawing on, in some degree, that dissolute state which, at its height, is confessed to be so miserable ; it would then, undoubtedly, be confessed, that since no ill, immoral, or unjust action, can be committed, without either a new inroad and breach on the temper and passions, or a further advancing of that execution already done ; whoever did ill, or acted in prejudice of his integrity, good-nature, or worth, would, of necessity, act with greater cruelty towards himself, than he who scrupled not to swallow what was poisonous, or who, with his own hands, should voluntarily mangle or wound his outward form or constitution, natural limbs or body*.” Here, to commit a bad action, is, first, to remove, a good and orderly affection, and to introduce an ill or disorderly one ;” next, it is, to commit an action that is ill, immoral, and unjust ;” and in the next line, it is, “ to do ill, or to act in prejudice of integrity, good-nature and worth ;” nay, so very simple a thing as a man’s wounding himself, is, “ to mangle or wound his outward form and constitution, his natural limbs or body.” Such superfluity of words is disgusting to every reader of correct taste ; and serves no purpose but to embarrass and perplex the sense. This sort of style is elegantly described by Quintilian, “ est in quibusdam turba inanum verborum, quidum communem loquendi morem reformidant,

* Characterist. Vol. II., p. 85.

"ducti specie nitoris, circumeunt omnia copiosa
"loquacitate quæ dicere volunt*." Lib. vii. cap. 2.

The great source of a loose style, in opposition to precision, is the injudicious use of those words termed synonymous. They are called synonymous, because they agree in expressing one principal idea; but, for the most part, if not always, they express it with some diversity in the circumstances. They are varied by some accessory idea which every word introduces, and which forms the distinction between them. Hardly, in any language, are there two words that convey precisely the same idea; a person thoroughly conversant in the propriety of the language, will always be able to observe something that distinguishes them. As they are like different shades of the same colour, an accurate writer can employ them to great advantage, by using them, so as to heighten and to finish the picture which he gives us. He supplies by one, what was wanting, in the other, to the force, or to the lustre of the image which he means to exhibit. But, in order to this end, he must be extremely attentive to the choice which he makes of them. For the bulk of writers are very apt to confound them with each other; and to employ them carelessly, merely for the sake of filling up a period, or of rounding and diversifying the language, as if their signification were exactly the same, while, in truth, it is not. Hence a certain mist and indistinctness is unwarily thrown over style.

In the Latin language, there are no two words we should more readily take to be synonymous; than *amare* and *diligere*. Cicero, however, has shown

* "A croud of unmeaning words is brought together, by some authors, who, afraid of expressing themselves after a common and ordinary manner, and allured by an appearance of splendor, surround every thing which they mean to say, with a certain copious loquacity."

us, that there is a very clear distinction betwixt them. "Quid ergo," says he, in one of his epistles, "tibi commendem cum quem tu ipse diligis? Sed tamen ut scires cum non a me *diligi* solum, verum etiam *amari*, ob eam rem tibi hæc scribo*." In the same manner, *tutus* and *securus* are words which we should readily confound; yet their meaning is different. *Tutus*, signifies out of danger; *securus*, free from the dread of it. Seneca has elegantly marked this distinction; "tuta scelera esse possunt, secura non possunt†." In our own language, very many instances might be given of a difference in meaning among words reputed synonymous; and, as the subject is of importance, I shall now point out some of these. The instances which I am to give, may themselves be of use; and they will serve to show the necessity of attending, with care and strictness, to the exact import of words, if ever we would write with propriety or precision.

Austerity, severity, rigour. Austerity relates to the manner of living; severity, of thinking; rigour, of punishing. To austerity, is opposed effeminacy; to severity, relaxation; to rigour, clemency. A hermit is austere in his life; a casuist, severe in his application of religion or law; a judge, rigorous in his sentences.

Custom, habit. Custom respects the action; habit, the actor. By custom, we mean the frequent repetition of the same act; by habit, the effect which that repetition produces on the mind or body. By the custom of walking often in the streets, one acquires a habit of idleness.

Surprised, astonished, amazed, confounded. I am surprised, with what is new or unexpected; I am astonished, at what is vast or great; I am amazed,

* Ad famil. l. 13. Ep. 47.

† Epist. 97.

with what is incomprehensible ; I am confounded, by what is shocking or terrible.

Desist, renounce, quit, leave off. Each of these words implies some pursuit or object relinquished ; but from different motives. We desist, from the difficulty of accomplishing. We renounce, on account of the disagreeableness of the object, or pursuit. We quit, for the sake of some other thing which interests us more ; and we leave off, because we are weary of the design. A politician desists from his designs, when he finds they are impracticable ; he renounces the court, because he has been affronted by it ; he quits ambition for study or retirement ; and leaves off his attendance on the great, as he becomes old and weary of it.

Pride, vanity. Pride makes us esteem ourselves ; vanity makes us desire the esteem of others. It is just to say, as dean Swift has done, that a man is too proud to be vain.

Haughtiness, disdain. Haughtiness is founded on the high opinion we entertain of ourselves ; disdain, on the low opinion we have of others.

To distinguish, to separate. We distinguish what we want not to confound with another thing ; we separate what we want to remove from it. Objects are distinguished from one another, by their qualities. They are separated, by the distance or time or place.

To weary, to fatigue. The continuance of the same thing wearies us ; labour fatigues us. I am weary with standing. I am fatigued with walking. A suitor wearies us by his perseverance ; fatigues us by his importunity.

To abhor, to detest. To abhor imports, simply, strong dislike ; to detest imports also strong disapprobation. One abhors being in debt ; he detests treachery.

To invent, to discover. We invent things that are

new ; we discover what was before hidden. Galileo invented the telescope ; Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood.

Only, alone. Only imports that there is no other of the same kind ; alone imports being accompanied by no other. An only child is one who has neither brother nor sister ; a child alone, is one who is left by itself. There is a difference, therefore, in precise language, betwixt these two phrases, " virtue only makes us happy ;" and, " virtue alone makes us happy." Virtue only makes us happy, imports, that nothing else can do it. Virtue alone makes us happy, imports, that virtue, by itself, or unaccompanied with other advantages, is sufficient to do it.

Entire, complete. A thing is entire, by wanting none of its parts ; complete, by wanting none of the appendages that belong to it. A man may have an entire house to himself, and yet not have one complete apartment.

Tranquillity, peace, calm. Tranquillity respects a situation free from trouble, considered in itself ; peace, the same situation with respect to any causes that might interrupt it ; calm, with regard to a disturbed situation going before, or following it. A good man enjoys tranquillity, in himself ; peace, with others ; and calm, after the storm.

A difficulty, an obstacle. A difficulty embarrasses ; an obstacle stops us. We remove the one ; we surmount the other. Generally, the first expresses somewhat arising from the nature and circumstances of the affair ; the second, somewhat arising from a foreign cause. Philip found difficulty in managing the Athenians from the nature of their dispositions ; but the eloquence of Demosthenes was the greatest obstacle to his designs.

Wisdom, prudence. Wisdom leads us to speak and act what is most proper. Prudence prevents our

speaking or acting improperly. A wise man employs the most proper means for success ; a prudent man, the safest means for not being brought into danger.

Enough, sufficient. Enough relates to the quantity which one wishes to have of any thing. Sufficient relates to the use that is to be made of it. Hence, enough generally imports a greater quantity than sufficient does. The covetous man never has enough ; although he has what is sufficient for nature.

To avow, to acknowledge, to confess. Each of these words imports the affirmation of a fact, but in very different circumstances. To avow, supposes the person to glory in it ; to acknowledge, supposes a small degree of faultiness, which the acknowledgment compensates ; to confess, supposes a higher degree of crime. A patriot avows his opposition to a bad minister, and is applauded ; a gentleman acknowledges his mistake, and is forgiven ; a prisoner confesses the crime he is accused of, and is punished.

To remark, to observe. We remark, in the way of attention, in order to remember ; we observe, in the way of examination, in order to judge. A traveller remarks the most striking objects he sees ; a general observes all the motions of his enemy.

Equivocal, ambiguous. An equivocal expression is one which has one sense open, and designed to be understood ; another sense concealed, and understood only by the person who uses it. An ambiguous expression is one, which has apparently two senses, and leaves us at a loss which of them to give it. An equivocal expression is used with an intention to deceive ; an ambiguous one, when it is used with design, is, with an intention not to give full information. An honest man will never employ an equivocal expression ; a confused man

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may often utter ambiguous ones, without any design. I shall give only one instance more.

With, by. Both these particles express the connexion between some instrument, or means of effecting an end, and the agent who employs it ; but *with* expresses a more close and immediate connexion ; *by*, a more remote one. We kill a man *with* a sword ; he dies *by* violence. The criminal is bound *with* ropes *by* the executioner. The proper distinction in the use of these particles, is elegantly marked in a passage of dr. Robertson's history of Scotland. When one of the old Scottish kings was making an enquiry into the tenure *by* which his nobles held their lands, they started up, and drew their swords : " *by* these," said they, " we acquired our lands, and *with* these, we will defend them." " *By* these we acquired our lands," signifies the more remote means of acquisition by force and martial deeds : and, " *with* these we will defend them," signifies the immediate direct instrument, the sword, which they would employ in their defence.

These are instances of words, in our language, which, by careless writers, are apt to be employed as perfectly synonymous, and yet are not so. Their significations approach, but are not precisely the same. The more the distinction in the meaning of such words is weighed, and attended to, the more clearly and forcibly shall we speak or write*.

* In French, there is a very useful treatise on this subject, the abbe Girard's *Synonymes Francoises*, in which he has made a large collection of such apparent synonyms in the language, and shown, with much accuracy, the difference in their signification. It is to be wished, that some such work were undertaken for our tongue, and executed with equal taste and judgment. Nothing would contribute more to precise and elegant writing. In the mean time, this French treatise may be perused with considerable profit. It will accustom persons to weigh, with attention, the force of words ; and will suggest several

From all that has been said on this head, it will now appear, that, in order to write or speak with precision, two things are especially requisite ; one, that an author's own ideas be clear and distinct ; and the other, that he have an exact and full comprehension of the force of those words which he employs. Natural genius is here required ; labour and attention still more. Dean Swift is one of the authors, in our language, most, distinguished for precision of style. In his writings, we seldom or never find vague expressions, and synonymous words, carelessly thrown together. His meaning is always clear, and strongly marked.

I had occasion to observe before, that though all subjects of writing or discourse demand perspicuity, yet all do not require the same degree of that exact precision, which I have endeavoured to explain. It is, indeed, in every sort of writing, a great beauty, to have, at least, some measure of precision, in distinction from that loose profusion of words, which imprints no clear idea on the reader's mind. But we must, at the same time, be on our guard, lest too great a study of precision, especially in subjects where it is not strictly requisite, betray us into a dry and barren style ; lest, from the desire of pruning too closely, we retrench all copiousness and ornament. Some degree of this failing may, perhaps, be remarked in dean Swift's serious works. Attentive only to exhibit his ideas clear and exact, resting wholly on his sense and distinctness, he appears to reject, disdainfully, all embellishment ; which, on some occasions, may be thought to render his manner somewhat hard and dry. To unite copiousness and precision, to be

distinctions betwixt synonymous terms in our own language, analogous to those which he has pointed out in the French ; and, accordingly, several of the instances above given were suggested by the work of this author.

flowing and graceful, and at the same time, correct and exact in the choice of every word, is, no doubt, one of the highest and most difficult attainments in writing. Some kinds of composition may require more of copiousness and ornament; others, more of precision and accuracy; nay, in the same composition, the different parts of it may demand a proper variation of manner. But we must study never to sacrifice, totally, any one of these qualities to the other: and, by a proper management, both of them may be made fully consistent, if our own ideas be precise, and our knowledge and stock of words be, at the same time, extensive.

LECTURE XI.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

HAVING begun to treat of style, in the last lecture I considered its fundamental quality, perspicuity. What I have said of this, relates chiefly to the choice of words. From words I proceed to sentences ; and as, in all writing and discourse, the proper composition and structure of sentences is of the highest importance, I shall treat of this fully. Though perspicuity be the general head, under which I, at present, consider language, I shall not confine myself to this quality alone, in sentences, but shall enquire also, what is requisite for their grace and beauty : that I may bring together, under one view, all that seems necessary to be attended to, in the construction and arrangement of words in a sentence.

It is not easy to give an exact definition of a sentence, or period, farther, than as it always implies some one complete proposition or enunciation of thought. Aristotle's definition is, in the main, a good one : “ Λέξις ὅχουσα ἀρχὴν καὶ τελευτὴν κατ’ αὐτήν, καὶ μεγεθὸς συνειρημένη : ” “ A form of speech which hath a be-

“giving and an end within itself, and are of such a length as to be easily comprehended at once.”

This, however, admits of great latitude. For a sentence, or period, consists always of component parts, which are called its members; and as these members may be either few or many, and may be connected in several different ways, the same thought, or mental proposition, may often be either brought into one sentence, or split into two or three, without the material breach of any rule.

The first variety that occurs in the consideration of sentences, is, the distinction of long and short ones. The precise length of sentences, as to the number of words, or the number of members, which may enter into them, cannot be ascertained by any definite measure. At the same time, it is obvious, there may be an extreme on either side. Sentences, immoderately long, and consisting of too many members, always transgress some one or other of the rules which I shall mention soon, as necessary to be observed in every good sentence. In discourses that are to be spoken, regard must be had to the easiness of pronunciation, which is not consistent with too long periods. In compositions where pronunciation has no place, still, however, by using long periods too frequently, an author overloads the reader's ear, and fatigues his attention. For long periods require, evidently, more attention than short ones, in order to perceive clearly the connexion of the several parts, and to take in the whole at one view. At the same time, there may be an excess in too many short sentences also; by which the sense is split and broken, the connexion of thought weakened, and the memory burdened by presenting to it a long succession of minute objects.

With regard to the length and construction of sentences, the French critics make a very just distinction.

inction of style, into *style periodique*, and *style coupe*. The *style periodique* is, where the sentences are composed of several members linked together, and hanging upon one another, so that the sense of the whole is not brought out till the close. This is the most pompous, musical, and oratorical manner of composing ; as in the following sentence of sir William Temple :
 “ if you look about you, and consider the lives of
 “ others as well as your own ; if you think how few
 “ are born with honour, and how many die without
 “ name or children ; how little beauty we see, and
 “ how few friends we hear of ; how many diseases,
 “ and how much poverty there is in the world ;
 “ you will fall down upon your knees, and, instead
 “ of repining at one affliction, will admire so many
 “ blessings which you have received from the hand
 “ of God.” (Letter to lady Essex.) Cicero abounds with sentences constructed after this manner.

The *style coupe* is, where the sense is formed into short independent propositions, each complete within itself ; as in the following of mr. Pope : “ I
 “ confess, it was want of consideration that made
 “ me an author. I writ, because it amused me. I
 “ corrected, because it was as pleasant to me to
 “ correct as to write. I published, because I was
 “ told, I might please such as it was a credit to
 “ please.” (Preface to his works.) This is very much the French method of writing ; and always suits gay and easy subjects. The *style periodique* gives an air of gravity and dignity to composition. The *style coupe* is more lively and striking. According to the nature of the composition, therefore, and the general character it ought to bear, the one or other may be predominant. But, in almost every kind of composition, the great rule is to intermix them. For the ear tires of either of them when too long continued : whereas, by a proper mixture of long and short periods, the ear is grati-

fied, and a certain sprightliness is joined with majesty in our style. "Non semper," says Cicero (describing, very expressively, these two different kinds of styles, of which I have been speaking), "non semper utendum est perpetuitate, et quasi conversatione verborum; sed sæpe carpenda membris minutioribus oratio est*."

This variety is of so great consequence, that it must be studied, not only in the succession of long and short sentences, but in the structure of our sentences also. A train of sentences, constructed in the same manner, and with the same number of members, whether long or short, should never be allowed to succeed one another. However musical each of them may be, it has a better effect to introduce even a discord, than to cloy the ear with the repetition of similar sounds: for, nothing is so tiresome as perpetual uniformity. In this article of the construction and distribution of his sentences, lord Shaftsbury has shown great art. In the last lecture, I observed, that he is often guilty of sacrificing precision of style to pomp of expression; and that there runs through his whole manner, a stiffness and affectation, which render him very unfit to be considered as a general model. But, as his ear was fine, and as he was extremely attentive to every thing that is elegant, he has studied the proper intermixture of long and short sentences, with variety and harmony in their structure, more than any other English author: and for this part of composition he deserves attention.

From these general observations, let us now descend to a more particular consideration of the qualities that are required to make a sentence perfect. So much depends upon the proper construction of

* "It is not proper always to employ a continued train, and a sort of regular compass of phrases; but style ought to be often broken down into smaller members."

sentences, that, in every sort of composition, we cannot be too strict in our attentions to it. For, be the subject what it will, if the sentences be constructed in a clumsy, perplexed, or feeble manner, it is impossible that a work, composed of such sentences, can be read with pleasure, or even with profit. Whereas, by giving attention to the rules which relate to this part of style, we acquire the habit of expressing ourselves with perspicuity and elegance; and if a disorder chance to arise in some of our sentences, we immediately see where it lies, and are able to rectify it*.

The properties most essential to a perfect sentence, seem to me, the four following: 1. Clearness and precision. 2. Unity. 3. Strength. 4. Harmony. Each of these, I shall illustrate separately, and at some length.

The first is, clearness and precision. The least failure here, the least degree of ambiguity, which leaves the mind in any sort of suspense as to the meaning, ought to be avoided with the greatest care; nor is it so easy a matter to keep always clear of this, as one might at first imagine. Ambiguity arises from two causes: either from a wrong choice of words, or a wrong collocation of them. Of the choice of words, as far as regards perspicuity, I

* On the structure of sentences, the ancients appear to have bestowed a great deal of attention and care. The treatise of Demetrius Phalereus, *περὶ ἑρμηνείας*, abounds with observations upon the choice and collocation of words, carried to such a degree of nicety, as would frequently seem to us minute. The treatise of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *περὶ ὑψηλοῦς ὁμοιοῦτος* is more masterly; but is chiefly confined to the musical structure of periods: a subject, for which the Greek language affords much more assistance to their writers, than our tongue-mits. On the arrangement of words, in English sentences, the xviiiith chapter of lord Kaime's Elements of criticism ought to be consulted; and also, the 2d volume of dr. Campbell's philosophy of rhetoric.

treated fully in the last lecture. Of the collocation of them, I am now to treat. The first thing to be studied here, is, to observe exactly the rules of grammar, as far as these can guide us. But as the grammar of our language is not extensive, there may often be an ambiguous collocation of words, where there is no transgression of any grammatical rule. The relations which the words, or members of a period, bear to one another, cannot be pointed out in English, as in the Greek or Latin, by means of termination; it is ascertained only by the position in which they stand. Hence a capital rule in the arrangement of sentences is, that the words or members most nearly related, should be placed in the sentence, as near to each other as possible; so as to make their mutual relation clearly appear. This is a rule not always observed, even by good writers, as strictly as it ought to be. It will be necessary to produce some instances, which will both show the importance of this rule, and make the application of it understood.

First, in the position of adverbs, which are used to qualify the signification of something which either precedes or follows them, there is often a good deal of nicety. "By greatness," says Mr. Addison, in the Spectator, No. 412, "I do not only mean the bulk of any single object, but the largeness of a whole view." Here the place of the adverb *only*, renders it a limitation of the following word, mean. "I do not only mean." The question may then be put, what does he more than mean? Had he placed it after *bulk*, still it would have been wrong. "I do not mean the *bulk only* of any single object." For we might then ask, what does he mean more than the bulk? Is it the colour? or any other property? Its proper place, undoubtedly, is, after the word *object*. "By greatness, I do not mean the bulk of any single object only; for then, when

we put the question, what more does he mean than the bulk of a single object? the answer comes out exactly as the author intends, and gives it; "the largeness of a whole view."—"Theism," says lord Shaftsbury, "can only be opposed to polytheism, or atheism." Does he mean that theism is capable of nothing else, except being opposed to polytheism or atheism? This is what his words literally import, through the wrong collocation of *only*. He should have said, "Theism can be opposed only to polytheism or atheism."—In like manner, dean Swift (project for the advancement of religion), "The Romans understood liberty, at least, as well as we." These words are capable of two different senses, according as the emphasis, in reading them, is laid upon *liberty*, or upon *at least*. In the first case, they will signify, that whatever other things we may understand better than the Romans, *liberty*, at least, was one thing which they understood as well as we. In the second case, they will import, that liberty was understood, *at least* as well by them as by us; meaning, that by them it was better understood. If this last, as I make no doubt, was dean Swift's own meaning, the ambiguity would have been avoided, and the sense rendered independent of the manner of pronouncing, by arranging the words thus; "The Romans understood liberty as well, at least, as we." The fact is, with respect to such adverbs, as, *only*, *wholly*, *at least*, and the rest of that tribe, that in common discourse, the tone and emphasis we use in pronouncing them, generally serves to show their reference, and to make the meaning clear; and hence, we acquire a habit of throwing them in loosely in the course of a period. But, in writing, where a man speaks to the eye, and not to the ear, he ought to be more accurate; and so to connect those adverbs with the

words which they qualify, as to put his meaning out of doubt upon the first inspection.

Secondly, When a circumstance is interposed in the middle of a sentence, it sometimes requires attention how to place it, so as to divest it of all ambiguity. For instance: "Are these designs" (says lord Bolingbroke, dissert. on parties, dedicat.) "Are these designs which any man, who is born a Briton, in any circumstances, in any situation, ought to be ashamed or afraid to avow?" Here we are left at a loss, whether these words, "*in any circumstances, in any situation, or,*" are connected with, "a man born in Britain, in any circumstances, or situation," or with that man's "avowing his designs, in any circumstances, or situation, into which he may be brought?" If the latter, as seems most probable, was intended to be the meaning, the arrangement ought to have been conducted thus: "Are these designs, which any man who is born a Briton, ought to be ashamed or afraid, in any circumstances, in any situation, to avow?" But,

Thirdly, still more attention is required to the proper disposition of the relative pronouns, *who*; *which*, *what*, *whose*, and of all those particles which express the connexion of the parts of speech with one another. As all reasoning depends upon this connexion, we cannot be too accurate and precise here. A small error may overcloud the meaning of the whole sentence; and even, where the meaning is intelligible, yet where these relative particles are out of their proper place, we always find something awkward and disjointed in the structure of the sentence. Thus, in the spectator, (No. 54.) "This kind of wit," says mr. Addison, "was very much in vogue among our countrymen, about an age or two ago, who did not practise it for any oblique reason, but purely for the sake of being witty." We are at no loss about

the meaning here ; but the construction would evidently be mended by disposing of the circumstance, " about an age or two ago," in such a manner as not to separate the relative, *who*, from its antecedent, *our countrymen* ; in this way : " About an age or two ago, this kind of wit was very much in vogue among our countrymen, who did not practise it for any oblique reason, but purely for the sake of being witty."—Spect. no. 412. " We nowhere meet with a more glorious and pleasing show in nature, than what appears in the heavens, at the rising and setting of the sun, *which* is wholly made up of those different stains of light, that show themselves in clouds of a different situation." *Which* is here designed to connect with the word *show*, as its antecedent ; but it stands so wide from it, that without a careful attention to the sense, we should be naturally led, by the rules of syntax, to refer it to the rising and setting of the sun, or to the sun itself ; and, hence, an indistinctness is thrown over the whole sentence. The following passage in bishop Sherlock's sermons (Vol. II. Sermon 15.) is still more censurable : " It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, by heaping up treasures, which nothing can protect us against, but the good providence of our Heavenly Father." *Which*, always refers grammatically to the immediately preceding substantive, which here is, " treasures ;" and this would make nonsense of the whole period. Every one feels this impropriety. The sentence ought to have stood thus : " It is folly to pretend, by heaping up treasures, to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, which nothing can protect us against, but the good providence of our Heavenly Father."

Of the like nature is the following inaccuracy of dean Swift's. He is recommending to young clergymen, to write their sermons fully and distinctly.

"Many," says he, "act so directly contrary to this method, that, from a habit of saving time and paper, which they acquired at the university, they write in so diminutive a manner, that they can hardly read what they have written." He certainly does not mean, that they had acquired time and paper at the university, but that they had acquired this habit there; and therefore his words ought to have run thus: "From a habit, which they have acquired at the university, of saving time and paper, they write in so diminutive a manner." In another passage, the same author has left his meaning altogether uncertain, by misplacing a relative. It is in the conclusion of his letter to a member of parliament, concerning the sacramental test: "Thus I have fairly given you, sir, my own opinion, as well as that of a great majority of both houses here, relating to this weighty affair; upon which I am confident you may securely reckon." Now I ask, what it is he would have his correspondent to reckon upon, securely? The natural construction leads to these words, "this weighty affair." But, as it would be difficult to make any sense of this, it is more probable he meant that the majority of both houses might be securely reckoned upon; though certainly this meaning, as the words are arranged, is obscurely expressed. The sentence would be amended by arranging thus: "Thus, sir, I have given you my own opinion, relating to this weighty affair, as well as that of a great majority of both houses here; upon which I am confident you may securely reckon."

Several other instances might be given; but I reckon those which I have produced sufficient to make the rule understood; that, in the construction of sentences, one of the first things to be attended to, is, the marshalling of the words in such order

us shall most clearly mark the relation of the several parts of the sentence to one another ; particularly, that adverbs shall always be made to adhere closely to the words which they are intended to qualify ; that, where a circumstance is thrown in, it shall never hang loose in the midst of a period, but be determined by its place to one or other member of it ; and that every relative word which is used, shall instantly present its antecedent to the mind of the reader, without the least obscurity. I have mentioned these three cases, because I think they are the most frequent occasions of ambiguity creeping into sentences.

With regard to relatives, I must farther observe, that obscurity often arises from the too frequent repetition of them, particularly of the pronouns *who*, and *they*, and *them*, and *theirs*, when we have occasion to refer to different persons ; as, in the following sentence of archbishop Tillotson (Vol. I. Sermon. 42.) : “ Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others ; and think that their reputation obscures them, and their commendable qualities stand in their light ; and therefore they do what they can to cast a cloud over them, that the bright shining of their virtues may not obscure them.” This is altogether careless writing. It renders style often obscure, always embarrassed and inelegant. When we find these personal pronouns crowding too fast upon us, we have often no method left, but to throw the whole sentence into some other form, which may avoid those frequent references to persons who have before been mentioned.

All languages are liable to ambiguities. Quintilian gives us some instances in the Latin, arising from faulty arrangement. A man, he tells us, ordered, by his will, to have erected for him, after his death, “ *Statuam auream hastam tenentem* ;” upon

which arose a dispute at law, whether the whole statue or the spear only, was to be of gold? The same author observes, very properly, that a sentence is always faulty when the collocation of the words is ambiguous, though the sense can be gathered. If any one should say, "*Chremetem audivi percussisse Demeam*," this is ambiguous both in sense and structure, whether Chremes or Demea gave the blow. But if this expression were used; "*Se vidisse hominem librum scribentem*," although the meaning be clear, yet Quintilian insists that the arrangement is wrong. "*Nam*," says he, "*etiamsi librum ab homine scribi pateat, non certe hominem a libro, male tamen composuerat, feceratque ambiguum quantum in ipso fuit*." Indeed, to have the relation of every word and member of a sentence marked in the most proper and distinct manner, gives not clearness only, but grace and beauty to a sentence, making the mind pass smoothly and agreeably along all the parts of it.

I proceed now to the second quality of a well-arranged sentence, which I termed its unity. This is a capital property. In every composition, of whatever kind, some degree of unity is required, in order to render it beautiful. There must be always some connecting principle among the parts. Some one object must reign and be predominant. This, as I shall hereafter show, holds in history, in epic and dramatic poetry, and in all orations. But most of all, in a single sentence, is required the strictest unity. For the very nature of a sentence implies one proposition to be expressed. It may consist of parts, indeed; but these parts must be so closely bound together, as to make the impression upon the mind, of one object, not of many. Now, in order to preserve this unity of a sentence, the following rules must be observed:

In the first place, during the course of the *sen-*

tence, the scene should be changed as little as possible. We should not be hurried by sudden transitions from person to person, nor from subject to subject. There is commonly, in every sentence, some person or thing, which is the governing word. This should be continued so, if possible, from the beginning to the end of it. Should I express myself thus: "After we came to anchor, they put me on shore, where I was welcomed by all my friends, who received me with the greatest kindness." In this sentence, though the objects contained in it have a sufficient connexion with each other, yet, by this manner of representing them, by shifting so often both the place and the person, *we*, and *they*, and *I*, and *who*, they appear in such a disunited view, that the sense of connexion is almost lost. The sentence is restored to its proper unity, by turning it after the following manner: "Having come to an anchor, I was put on shore, where I was welcomed by all my friends, and received with the greatest kindness." Writers who transgress this rule, for the most part transgress, at the same time,

A second rule; never to crowd into one sentence, things which have so little connexion, that they could bear to be divided into two or three sentences. The violation of this rule never fails to hurt and displease a reader. Its effect, indeed, is so bad, that, of the two, it is the safer extreme, to err rather by too many short sentences, than by one that is overloaded and embarrassed. Examples abound in authors. I shall produce some, to justify what I now say. "Archbishop Tillotson," says an author of the history of England, "died in this year. He was exceedingly beloved both by king William and queen Mary, who nominated dr. Tennison, bishop of Lincoln, to succeed him." Who would expect the latter part of this sentence to follow,

In consequence of the former ? "He was exceedingly beloved by both king and queen," is the proposition of the sentence : we look for some proof of this, or at least something related to it, to follow ; when we are on a sudden carried off to a new proposition, "who nominated Dr. Tennison to succeed him." The following is from Middleton's life of Cicero : "In this uneasy state, both of his public and private life, Cicero was oppressed by a new and cruel affliction, the death of his beloved daughter Tullia ; which happened soon after her divorce from Dolabella ; whose manners and humours were entirely disagreeable to her." The principal object in this sentence is, the death of Tullia, which was the cause of her father's affliction ; the date of it, as happening soon after her divorce from Dolabella, may enter into the sentence with propriety ; but the subjunction of Dolabella's character is foreign to the main object ; and breaks the unity and compactness of the sentence totally, by setting a new picture before the reader. The following sentence, from a translation of Plutarch, is still worse : "Their march," says the author, speaking of the Greeks under Alexander, "their march was through an uncultivated country, whose savage inhabitants fared hardly, having no other riches than a breed of lean sheep, whose flesh was rank and unfavoury ; by reason of their continual feeding upon sea-fish." Here the scene is changed upon us again and again. The march of the Greeks, the description of the inhabitants through whose country they travelled ; the account of their sheep, and the cause of their sheep being ill tasted food, form a jumble of objects, slightly related to each other, which the reader cannot, without much difficulty, comprehend under one view.

These examples have been taken from sentences

ces of no great length, yet over-crowded. Authors who deal in long sentences, are very apt to be faulty in this article. One need only open lord Clarendon's history, to find examples every where. The long, involved, and intricate sentences of that author, are the greatest blemish of his composition; though in other respects, as a historian, he has considerable merit. In later, and more correct writers than lord Clarendon, we find a period sometimes running out so far, and comprehending so many particulars, as to be more properly a discourse than a sentence. Take, for an instance, the following from sir William Temple, in his essay upon poetry: "The usual acceptation takes profit and pleasure for two different things; and not only calls the followers or votaries of them by the several names of busy and idle men; but distinguishes the faculties of the mind, that are conversant about them, calling the operations of the first, wisdom; and of the other, wit; which is a Saxon word, used to express what the Spaniards and Italians call *Ingenio*; and the French, *Esprit*, both from the Latin; though I think wit more particularly signifies that of poetry, as may occur in remarks on the Runic language." When one arrives at the end of such a puzzled sentence, he is surprised to find himself got to so great a distance from the object with which he at first set out.

Lord Shaftsbury, often betrayed into faults by his love of magnificence, shall afford us the next example. It is in his rhapsody, where he is describing the cold regions: "At length," says he, "the sun approaching, melts the snow, sets long men at liberty, and affords them means and time to make provision against the next return of cold." This first sentence is correct enough; but he goes on: "It breaks the icy fet-

" ters of the main, where vast sea-monsters pierce
 " through floating islands, with arms which can
 " withstand the crystal rock ; whilst others, who
 " of themselves seem great as islands, are by their
 " bulk alone armed against all but man, whose
 " superiority over creatures of such stupendous
 " size and force, should make him mindful of his
 " privilege of reason, and force him humbly to
 " adore the great composer of these wondrous
 " frames, and the author of his own superior
 " wisdom." Nothing can be more unhappy or
 embarrassed than this sentence ; the worse, too,
 as it is intended to be descriptive, where every
 thing should be clear. It forms no distinct im-
 age whatever. The *it*, at the beginning, is am-
 biguous, whether it mean the sun or the cold.
 The object is changed three times in the sentence ;
 beginning with the sun which breaks the icy fet-
 ters of the main ; then the sea-monsters become the
 principal personages ; and lastly, by a very unex-
 pected transition, man is brought into view, and
 receives a long and serious admonition before the
 sentence closes. I do not at present insist on the im-
 propriety of such expressions, as, *God's being the*
composer of frames ; and the sea-monsters having
arms that withstand rocks. Shaftsbury's strength lay
 in reasoning and sentiment, more than in descrip-
 tion ; however much his descriptions have been
 sometimes admired.

I shall only give one instance more on this head,
 from dean Swift ; in his proposal, too, for cor-
 recting the English language : where, in place of
 a sentence, he has given a loose dissertation upon
 several subjects. Speaking of the progress of our
 language, after the time of Cromwell : " To this
 " succeeded," says he, " that licentiousness, which
 " entered with the restoration, and, from infect-
 " ing our religion and morals, fell to corrupt our

" language ; which last was not like to be much
 " improved by those, who at that time made up
 " the court of king Charles the second ; either
 " such as had followed him in his banishment ;
 " or who had been altogether conversant in the
 " dialect of these fanatic times ; or young men
 " who had been educated in the same country ;
 " so that the court, which used to be the standard
 " of correctness and propriety of speech, was then,
 " and I think has ever since continued, the worst
 " school in England for that accomplishment ; and
 " so will remain ; till better care be taken in the
 " education of our nobility, that they may set out
 " into the world with some foundation of litera-
 " ture, in order to qualify them for patterns of
 " politeness." How many different facts, reason-
 ings, and observations, are here presented to the
 mind at once ! and yet so linked together by the
 author, that they all make parts of a sentence,
 which admits of no greater division in pointing,
 than a semicolon between any of its members !
 Having mentioned pointing, I shall here take no-
 tice, that it is in vain to propose, by arbitrary
 punctuation, to amend the defects of a sentence,
 to correct its ambiguity, or to prevent its con-
 fusion. For commas, colons, and points, do not
 make the proper divisions of thought ; but only
 serve to mark those which arise from the tenor of
 the author's expression : and, therefore, they are
 proper or not, just according as they correspond
 to the natural division of the sense. When they
 are inserted in wrong places, they deserve, and
 will meet with, no regard.

I proceed to a third rule, for preserving the uni-
 ty of sentences ; which is, to keep clear of all
 parentheses in the middle of them. On some oc-
 casions, these may have a spirited appearance ; as
 prompted by a certain vivacity of thought, which

can glance happily aside, as it is going along. But, for the most part, their effect is extremely bad: being a sort of wheels within wheels; sentences in the midst of sentences; the perplexed method of disposing of some thought, which a writer wants art to introduce in its proper place. It were needless to give many instances, as they occur so often among incorrect writers. I shall produce one from lord Bolingbroke, the rapidity of whose genius, and manner of writing, betrays him frequently into inaccuracies of this sort. It is in the introduction to his idea of a patriot king, where he writes thus: "It seems to me, that, in order to maintain the system of the world, at a certain point, far below that of ideal perfection (for we are made capable of conceiving what we are incapable of attaining), but, however, sufficient, upon the whole, to constitute a state easy and happy, or at the worst, tolerable; I say, it seems to me, that the author of nature has thought fit to mingle, from time to time, among the societies of men, a few, and but a few, of those on whom he is graciously pleased to bestow a larger portion of the ethereal spirit, than is given, in the ordinary course of his government, to the sons of men." A very bad sentence this; into which by the help of a parenthesis, and other interjected circumstances, his lordship had contrived to thrust so many things, that he is forced to begin the construction again with the phrase, *I say*; which, whenever it occurs, may be always assumed as a sure mark of a clumsy, ill-constructed sentence; excusable in speaking, where the greatest accuracy is not expected, but in polished writing, unpardonable.

I shall add only one rule more for the unity of a sentence, which is, to bring it always to a full, and perfect close. Every thing that is one, should

have a beginning, a middle, and an end. I need not take notice, that an unfinished sentence is no sentence at all, according to any grammatical rule. But very often we meet with sentences, that are, so to speak, more than finished. When we have arrived at what we expected was to be the conclusion, when we have come to the word on which the mind is naturally led, by what went before, to rest ; unexpectedly, some circumstance pops out, which ought to have been omitted, or to have been disposed of elsewhere ; but which is left lagging behind, like a tail adjoined to the sentence ; somewhat, that, as Mr. Pope describes the Alexandrine line,

“ Like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.”

All these adjunctions to the proper close, disfigure a sentence extremely. They give it a lame ungraceful air, and, in particular, they break its unity. Dean Swift, for instance, in his letter to a young clergyman, speaking of Cicero's writings, expresses himself thus : “ With these writings young divines are more conversant, than with those of Demosthenes, who, by many degrees, excelled the other ; at least, as an orator.” Here the natural close of the sentence is at these words, “ excelled the other.” These words conclude the proposition ; we look for no more ; and the circumstance added, “ at least, as an orator,” comes in with a very halting pace. How much more compact would the sentence have been, if turned thus : “ With these writings, young divines are more conversant than with those of Demosthenes, who, by many degrees, as an orator at least, excelled the other.” In the following sentence, from Sir William Temple, the adjunction to the sentence is altogether foreign to it. Speaking of Burnet's theory of the earth, and Fontenelle's plurality of worlds,

"the first," says he, "could not end his learned treatise, without a panegyric of modern learning, in comparison of the ancient; and the other falls so grossly into the censure of the old poetry, and preference of the new, that I could not read either of these strains without some indignation; which no quality among men is so apt to raise in me as self-sufficiency." The word "indignation," concluded the sentence; the last member, "which no quality among men is so apt to raise in me as self-sufficiency," is a proposition altogether new, added after the proper close.

LECTURE XII.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

HAVING treated of perspicuity and unity, as necessary to be studied in the structure of sentences, I proceed to the third quality of a correct sentence, which I termed strength. By this, I mean, such a disposition of the several words and members, as shall bring out the sense to the best advantage; as shall render the impression, which the period is designed to make, most full and complete; and give every word, and every member, their due weight and force. The two former qualities of perspicuity and unity, are, no doubt, absolutely necessary to the production of this effect; but more is still requisite. For a sentence may be clear enough; it may also be compact enough, in all its parts, or have the requisite unity; and yet, by some unfavourable circumstance in the structure, it may fail in that strength or liveliness of impression, which a more happy arrangement would have produced.

The first rule which I shall give for promoting the strength of a sentence, is, to divest it of all re-

redundant words. These may, sometimes, be consistent with a considerable degree both of clearness and unity; but they are always enfeebling. They make the sentence move along tardy and encumbered;

*Est brevitate opus, ut currat sententia, non se
Impediat verbis, lassas onerantibus aures*.*

It is a general maxim, that any words, which do not add some importance to the meaning of a sentence, always spoil it. They cannot be superfluous, without being hurtful. "Obstat," says Quintilian, "quicquid non adjuvat." All that can be easily supplied in the mind, is better left out in the expression. Thus: "content with deserving a triumph, he refused the honour of it," is better language than to say, "being content with deserving a triumph, he refused the honour of it." I consider it, therefore, as one of the most useful exercises of correction, upon reviewing what we have written or composed, to contract that round-about method of expression, and to lop off those useless excrescences which are commonly found in a first draught. Here a severe eye should be employed; and we shall always find our sentences acquire more vigour and energy when thus retrenched; provided always, that we run not into the extreme of pruning so very close, as to give a hardness and dryness to style. For here, as in all other things, there is a due medium. Some regard, though not the principal, must be had to fullness and swelling of sound. Some leaves must be left to surround and shelter the fruit.

As sentences should be cleared of redundant words, so also of redundant members. As every word ought to present a new idea, so every mem-

* "Concise your diction, let your sense be clear,
"Nor with a weight of words, fatigue the ear."

ber ought to contain a new thought. Opposed to this, stands the fault we sometimes meet with, of the last member of a period, being no other than the echo of the former, or the repetition of it in somewhat a different form. For example; speaking of beauty, "the very first discovery of it," says mr. Addison, "strikes the mind with inward joy, and spreads delight through all its faculties." (No. 412.) And elsewhere, "It is impossible for us to behold the divine works with coldness or indifference, or to survey so many beauties, without a secret satisfaction and complacency." (No. 413.) In both these instances, little or nothing is added by the second member of the sentence, to what was already expressed in the first: and though the free and flowing manner of such an author as mr. Addison, and the graceful harmony of his periods, may palliate such negligences; yet, in general, it holds, that style, freed from this prolixity, appears both more strong and more beautiful. The attention becomes remiss, the mind falls into inaction, when words are multiplied without a corresponding multiplication of ideas.

After removing superfluities, the second direction I give, for promoting the strength of a sentence, is, to attend particularly to the use of copulatives, relatives, and all the particles employed for transition and connexion. These little words, *but*, *and*, *which*, *whose*, *where*, &c. are frequently the most important words of any; they are the joints or hinges upon which all sentences turn, and, of course, much, both of their gracefulness and strength must depend upon such particles. The varieties in using them are, indeed, so infinite, that no particular system of rules, respecting them, can be given. Attention to the practice of the most accurate writers, joined with frequent trials of the different effects, produced by a different usage of those particles,

must here direct us*. Some observations I shall mention, which have occurred to me as useful, without pretending to exhaust the subject.

What is called splitting of particles, or separating a preposition from the noun which it governs, is always to be avoided. As if I should say, "Though virtue borrows no assistance from, yet it may often be accompanied by, the advantages of fortune." In such instances, we feel a sort of pain, from the revulsion, or violent separation of two things, which by their nature, should be closely united. We are put to a stand in thought; being obliged to rest for a little on the preposition by itself, which, at the same time, carries no significance, till it is joined to its proper substantive noun.

Some writers needlessly multiply demonstrative and relative particles, by the frequent use of such phraseology as this: "There is nothing which disgusts us sooner than the empty pomp of language." In introducing a subject, or laying down a proposition, to which we demand particular attention, this sort of style is very proper; but, in the ordinary current of discourse, it is better to express ourselves more simply and shortly: "Nothing disgusts us sooner than the empty pomp of language."

Other writers make a practice of omitting the relative, in a phrase of a different kind from the former, where they think the meaning can be understood without it. As, "The man I love."—"The dominions we possessed, and the conquests we made." But though this elliptical style be intelligible, and is allowable in conversation andistolary writing, yet, in all writings of a serious

On this head, dr. Lowth's short introduction to English grammar deserves to be consulted; where several niceties of the language are well pointed out.

or dignified kind, it is ungraceful. There, the relative should always be inserted in its proper place; and the construction filled up: "The man whom I love."—"The dominions which we possessed, and the conquests which we made."

With regard to the copulative particle, *and*, which occurs so frequently in all kinds of composition, several observations are to be made. First, it is evident, that the unnecessary repetition of it enfeebles style. It has the same sort of effect, as the frequent use of the vulgar phrase, *and so*, when one is telling a story in common conversation. We shall take a sentence from sir William Temple, for an instance. He is speaking of the refinement of the French language: "The academy set up by cardinal Richelieu, to amuse the wits of that age and country, and divert them from raking into his politics and ministry, brought this into vogue; and the French wits have, for this last age, been wholly turned to the refinement of their style and language; and, indeed, with such success, that it can hardly be equalled, and runs equally through their verse and their prose." Here are no fewer than eight *ands* in one sentence. This agreeable writer too often makes his sentences drag in this manner, by a careless multiplication of copulatives. It is strange how a writer so accurate as dean Swift, should have stumbled on so improper an application of this particle, as he has made in the following sentence; Essay on the fates of clergymen. "There is no talent so useful towards rising in the world, or which puts men more out of the reach of fortune, than that quality generally possessed by the dullest sort of people, and is, in common language, called discretion; a species of lower prudence, by the assistance of which," &c. By the insertion of, *and is*, in place of, *which is*, he has not only clogged the sentence, but even made it ungrammatical.

But, in the next place, it is worthy of observation, that though the natural use of the conjunction, *and*, be to join objects together, and thereby, as one would think, to make their connexion more close ; yet, in fact, by dropping the conjunction, we often mark a closer connexion, a quicker succession of objects, than when it is inserted between them. Longinus makes this remark ; which, from many instances, appears to be just : “ Veni, vidi, vici*,” expresses, with more spirit, the rapidity and quick succession of conquest, than if connecting particles had been used. So, in the following description of a rout in Cesar’s commentaries : “ Nostri, emissis pilis, gladiis rem gerunt ; repente post tergum equitatus cernitur ; cohortes aliæ appropinquant. Hostes terga vertunt ; fugientibus equites occurrunt ; fit magna cædes†.” Bell. Gall. l. 7.

Hence, it follows, that when, on the other hand, we seek to prevent a quick transition from one object to another, when we are making some enumeration, in which we wish that the objects should appear as distinct from each other as possible, and that the mind should rest, for a moment, on each object by itself ; in this case, copulatives may be multiplied with peculiar advantage and grace. As when lord Bolingbroke says, “ Such a man might fall a victim to power ; but truth, and reason, and liberty, would fall with him.” In the same manner, Cesar describes an engagement with the Nervii : “ His equitibus facile pulsus ac proturbatus, incredibile celeritate ad flumen decurrerunt ;

* “ I came, I saw, I conquered.”

† “ Our men, after having discharged their javelins, attack with sword in hand : of a sudden, the cavalry make their appearance behind ; other bodies of men are seen drawing near : the enemies turn their backs ; the horse meet them in their flight ; a great slaughter ensues.”

“ ut pene uno tempore, et ad silvas, et in flumine,
 “ et jam in manibus nostris, hostes viderentur*.”

Bell. Gall. l. 2. Here, although he is describing a quick succession of events, yet, as it is his intention to show in how many places the enemy seemed to be at one time, the copulative is very happily redoubled, in order to paint more strongly the distinction of these several places.

This attention to the several cases, when it is proper to omit, and when to redouble the copulative, is of considerable importance to all who study eloquence. For, it is a remarkable particularity in language, that the omission of a connecting particle should sometimes serve to make objects appear more closely connected ; and that the repetition of it should distinguish and separate them, in some measure, from each other. Hence, the omission of it is used to denote rapidity ; and the repetition of it is designed to retard, and to aggravate. The reason seems to be, that, in the former case, the mind is supposed to be hurried so fast through a quick succession of objects, that it has not leisure to point out their connexion ; it drops the copulatives in its hurry ; and crowds the whole series together, as if it were but one object. Whereas, when we enumerate, with a view to aggravate, the mind is supposed to proceed with a more slow and solemn pace ; it marks fully the relation of each object to that which succeeds it ; and, by joining them together with several copulatives, makes you perceive, that the objects, though connected, are yet, in themselves, distinct—that they are many, not one. Observe, for instance, in the fol-

* “ The enemy, having easily beat off and scattered this body of horse, ran down with incredible celerity to the river ; so that, almost at one moment of time, they appeared to be in the woods, and in the river, and in the midst of our troops.”

lowing enumeration, made by the apostle Paul, what additional weight and distinctness is given to each particular, by the repetition of a conjunction. "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God." Rom. viii. 38, 39. So much with regard to the use of copulatives.

I proceed to a third rule, for promoting the strength of a sentence, which is, to dispose of the capital word, or words, in that place of the sentence, where they will make the fullest impression. That such capital words there are in every sentence, on which the meaning principally rests, every one must see; and that these words should possess a conspicuous and distinguished place, is equally plain. Indeed, that place of the sentence where they will make the best figure, whether the beginning, or the end, or, sometimes, even the middle, cannot, as far as I know, be ascertained by any precise rule. This must vary with the nature of the sentence. Perspicuity must ever be studied in the first place; and the nature of our language allows no great liberty in the choice of collocation. For the most part, with us, the important words are placed in the beginning of the sentence. So Mr. Addison: "The pleasures of the imagination, taken in their full extent, are not so gross as those of sense, so refined as those of the understanding." And this, indeed, seems the most plain and natural order, to place that in the front which is the chief object of the proposition we are laying down. Sometimes, however, when we intend to give weight to a sentence, it is of advantage to suspend the meaning for a little, and then bring it out full at the close: "Thus," says

mr. Pope, "on whatever side we contemplate
"Homer, what principally strikes us, is, his won-
"derful invention." (Pref. to Homer.)

The Greek and Latin writers had a considerable
advantage above us, in this part of style. By the
great liberty of inversion, which their languages
permitted, they could choose the most advantageous
situation for every word; and had it thereby in
their power to give their sentences more force.
Milton, in his prose works, and some other of our
old English writers, endeavoured to imitate them
in this. But the forced constructions, which they
employed, produced obscurity; and the genius of
our language, as it is now written and spoken, will
not admit of such liberties. Mr. Gordon, who
followed this inverted style in his translation of
Tacitus, has sometimes done such violence to the
language, as even to appear ridiculous; as in
this expression: "Into this hole, thrust them-
selves three Roman senators." He has translated
so simple a phrase as, "Nullum ea tempestate bel-
lum," by, "war at that time there was none."
However, within certain bounds, and to a limited
degree, our language does admit of inversions;
and they are practised with success by the best
writers. So mr. Pope, speaking of Homer, "The
praise of judgment Virgil has justly contested
with him; but his invention remains yet unrival-
led." It is evident, that, in order to give the
sentence its due force, by contrasting properly the
two capital words, "judgment and invention,"
this is a happier arrangement, than if he had follow-
ed the natural order, which was, "Virgil has just-
ly contested with him the praise of judgment,
but his invention remains yet unrivalled."

Some writers practise this degree of inversion,
which our language bears, much more than others;
lord Shaftsbury, for instance, much more than mr.

Addison ; and to this sort of arrangement is owing, in a great measure, that appearance of strength, dignity, and varied harmony, which lord Shaftsbury's style possesses. This will appear from the following sentences of his enquiry into virtue ; where all the words are placed not strictly in natural order, but with that artificial construction, which may give the period most emphasis and grace. He is speaking of the misery of vice :—" This, as to the complete immoral state, is, what of their own accord, men readily remark. Where there is this absolute degeneracy, this total apostacy from all candor, trust, or equity, there are few who do not see and acknowledge the misery which is consequent. Seldom is the case misconstrued, when at worst. The misfortune is, that we look not on this depravity, nor consider how it stands, in less degrees. As if, to be absolutely immoral, were, indeed, the greatest misery ; but, to be so in a little degree, should be no misery or harm at all. Which to allow, is just as reasonable as to own, that 'tis the greatest ill of a body, to be in the utmost manner maimed or distorted : but that, to lose the use only of one limb, or to be impaired in some single organ or member, is no ill worthy the least notice." (Vol. ii. p. 82.) Here is no violence done to the language, though there are many inversions. All is stately, and arranged with art ; which is the great characteristic of this author's style.

We need only open any page of mr. Addison, to see quite a different order in the construction of sentences. "Our sight is the most perfect, and most delightful of all our senses. It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance, and continues the longest in action, without being tired, or satiated with its proper enjoyments. The sense

“ of feeling can, indeed, give us a notion of extension, shape, and all other ideas that enter at the eye, except colours ; but, at the same time, it is very much straitened and confined in its operations,” &c. (Spectator, No. 411.) In this strain, he always proceeds, following the most natural and obvious order of the language ; and if, by this means, he has less pomp and majesty than Shaftsbury, he has, in return, more nature, more ease and simplicity ; which are beauties of a higher order.

But whether we practise inversion or not, and in whatever part of the sentence we dispose of the capital words, it is always a point of great moment, that these capital words shall stand clear and disentangled from any other words that would clog them. Thus, when there are any circumstances of time, place, or other limitations, which the principal object of our sentence requires to have connected with it, we must take especial care to dispose of them, so as not to cloud that principal object, nor to bury it under a load of circumstances. This will be made clearer by an example. Observe the arrangement of the following sentence, in lord Shaftsbury’s advice to an author. He is speaking of modern poets, as compared with the ancient : “ If, whilst they profess only to please, they secretly advise, and give instruction, they may now, perhaps, as well as formerly, be esteemed, with justice, the best and most honourable among authors.” This is a well-constructed sentence. It contains a great many circumstances and adverbs, necessary to qualify the meaning ; *only, secretly, as well, perhaps, now, with justice, formerly* ; yet these are placed with so much art as neither to embarrass, nor weaken the sentence ; while that which is the capital object in it, viz. “ Poets being justly esteemed the best and

"most honourable among authors," comes out in the conclusion clear and detached, and possesses its proper place. See now, what would have been the effect of a different arrangement. Suppose him to have placed the members of the sentence thus : "If, whilst they profess to please only, they advise and give instruction secretly, they may be esteemed the best and most honourable among authors, with justice, perhaps, now, as well as formerly." Here we have precisely the same words, and the same sense ; but, by means of the circumstances being so intermingled as to clog the capital words, the whole becomes perplexed, without grace, and without strength.

A fourth rule, for constructing sentences with proper strength, is, to make the members of them go on rising and growing in their importance above one another. This sort of arrangement is called a climax, and is always considered as a beauty in composition. From what cause it pleases, is abundantly evident. In all things, we naturally love to ascend to what is more and more beautiful, rather than to follow the retrograde order. Having had once some considerable object set before us, it is with pain, we are pulled back to attend to an inferior circumstance. "Cavendum est," says Quintilian, whose authority I always willingly quote, "ne decrescat oratio, et fortiori subjungatur aliquid infirmius ; sicut, sacrilego, fur ; aut latroni petulans. Augeri enim debent sententiæ et insurgere*." Of this beauty, in the construction of sentences, the orations of Cicero furnish many examples. His pompous manner na-

Care must be taken, that our composition shall not fall and that a weaker expression shall not follow one of more strength ; as if, after sacrilege, we should bring in theft ; or, having mentioned a robbery, we should subjoin petulance. Sentences ought always to rise and grow."

turally led him to study it ; and, generally, in order to render the climax perfect, he makes both the sense and the sound rise together, with a very magnificent swell. So in his oration for Milo, speaking of a design of Clodius's for assassinating Pompey : " Atqui si res, si vir, si tempus ullum dignum fuit, certe hæc in illa causa summa omnia fuerunt. Insidiator erat in foro collocatus, atque in vestibulo ipso senatus ; ei viro autem mors parabatur, cujus in vita nitebatur salus civitatis ; eo porro reipublicæ tempore, quo si unus ille occidisset, non hæc solum civitas, sed gentes omnes concidissent." The following instance, from lord Bolingbroke, is also beautiful : " This decency, this grace, this propriety of manners to character, is so essential to princes in particular, that, whenever it is neglected, their virtues lose a great degree of lustre, and their defects acquire much aggravation. Nay more ; by neglecting this decency and this grace, and for want of a sufficient regard to appearances, even their virtues may betray them into failings, their failings into vices, and their vices into habits unworthy of princes, and unworthy of men." (Idea of a patriot king.)

I must observe, however, that this sort of full and oratorical climax, can neither be always obtained, nor ought to be always sought after. Only some kinds of writing admit such sentences : and, to study them too frequently, especially if the subject require not so much pomp, is affected and disagreeable. But there is something approaching to a climax, which it is a general rule to study, " ne crescat oratio," as Quintilian speaks, " et ne fortiori subjungatur aliquid infirmius." A weaker assertion or proposition should never come after a stronger one ; and when our sentence consists of two members, the longest should, generally, be the

concluding one. There is a twofold reason for this last direction. Periods, thus divided, are pronounced more easily; and the shortest member being placed first, we carry it more readily in our memory as we proceed to the second, and see the connexion of the two more clearly. Thus, to say, "When our passions have forsaken us, we flatter ourselves with the belief that we have forsaken them," is both more graceful and more clear, than to begin with the longest part of the proposition: "We flatter ourselves with the belief that we have forsaken our passions, when they have forsaken us." In general, it is always agreeable to find a sentence rising upon us; and growing in its importance to the very last word, when this construction can be managed without affectation, or unseasonable pomp. "If we rise yet higher," says Mr. Addison, very beautifully, "and consider the fixed stars as so many oceans of flame, that are each of them attended with a different set of planets; and still discover new firmaments and new lights, that are sunk farther into those unfathomable depths of æther; we are lost in such a labyrinth of suns and worlds, and confounded with the magnificence and immensity of nature." (Spect. No. 420.) Hence follows clearly,

A fifth rule for the strength of sentences; which is, to avoid concluding them with an adverb, a preposition, or any inconsiderable word. Such conclusions are always enfeebling and degrading. There are sentences, indeed, where the stress and significancy rest chiefly upon some words of this kind. In this case, they are not to be considered as circumstances, but as the capital figures; and ought, in propriety, to have the principal place allotted them. No fault, for instance, can be found with this sentence of Bolingbroke's: "In their prosperity, my friends shall never hear of me; in

“ their adversity always.” Where *never*, and *always*, being emphatical words, were to be so placed, as to make a strong impression. But I speak now of those inferior parts of speech, when introduced as circumstances, or as qualifications of more important words. In such case, they should always be disposed of in the least conspicuous parts of the period ; and so classed with other words of greater dignity, as to be kept in their proper secondary station.

Agreeably to this rule, we should always avoid concluding with any of those particles, which mark the cases of nouns—*of*, *to*, *from*, *with*, *by*. For instance, it is a great deal better to say, “ Avarice is a crime, of which wise men are often guilty,” than to say, “ Avarice is a crime, which wise men are often guilty of.” This is a phraseology which all correct writers shun, and with reason. For, besides the want of dignity which arises from those monosyllables at the end, the imagination cannot avoid resting, for a little, on the import of the word which closes the sentence : and, as those prepositions have no import of their own, but only serve to point out the relations of other words, it is disagreeable for the mind to be left pausing on a word, which does not, by itself, produce any idea, nor form any picture in the fancy.

For the same reason, verbs which are used in a compound sense, with some of these prepositions, are, though not so bad, yet still not so beautiful conclusions of a period ; such as, *bring about*, *lay hold of*, *come over to*, *clear up*, and many other of this kind : instead of which, if we can employ a simple verb, it always terminates the sentence with more strength. Even the pronoun *it*, though it has the import of a substantive noun, and indeed often forces itself upon us unavoidably, yet, when we want to give dignity to a sentence, should, if

possible, be avoided in the conclusion; more especially when it is joined with some of the prepositions, as, *with it, in it, to it*. In the following sentence of the Spectator, which otherwise is abundantly noble, the bad effect of this close is sensible:

"There is not, in my opinion, a more pleasing
"and triumphant consideration in religion, than
"this, of the perpetual progress which the soul
"makes towards the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at a period in it." (No. 111.)
How much more graceful the sentence, if it had been so constructed as to close with the word, *period!*

Besides particles and pronouns, any phrase, which expresses a circumstance only, always brings up the rear of a sentence with a bad grace. We may judge of this, by the following sentence from lord Bolingbroke (Letter on the state of parties at the accession of king George I.): "Let me therefore
"conclude by repeating, that division has caused
"all the mischief we lament; that union alone
"can retrieve it; and that a great advance towards this union, was the coalition of parties,
"so happily begun, so successfully carried on, and
"of late so unaccountably neglected; to say no
"worse." This last phrase, *to say no worse*, occasions a sad falling off at the end; so much the more unhappy, as the rest of the period is conducted after the manner of a climax, which we expect to find growing to the last.

The proper disposition of such circumstances in a sentence, is often attended with considerable trouble, in order to adjust them so, as shall consist equally with the perspicuity and the grace of the period. Though necessary parts, they are, however, like unshapely stones in a building, which try the skill of an artist, where to place them with the least offence. "Jungantur," says Quintilian, "quo congruunt maxime; sicut in structura faxo-

"rum rudiant, etiam ipsa enormitas invenit cui applicari, et in quo possit insistere*."

The close is always an unsuitable place for them. When the sense admits it, the sooner they are dispatched, generally speaking, the better; that the more important and significant words may possess the last place, quite disencumbered. It is a rule, too, never to crowd too many circumstances together, but rather to intersperse them in different parts of the sentence, joined with the capital words on which they depend; provided that care be taken, as I have before directed, not to clog those capital words with them. For instance, when dean Swift says, "What I had the honour of mentioning to your lordship, some time ago, in conversation, was not a new thought." (Letter to the earl of Oxford.) These two circumstances, *some time ago*, and *in conversation*, which are here put together, would have had a better effect disjoined, thus: "What I had the honour, sometime ago, of mentioning to your lordship in conversation." And in the following sentence of lord Bolingbroke's (Remarks on the history of England): "A monarchy, limited like ours, may be placed, for aught I know, as it has been often represented, just in the middle point, from whence a deviation leads, on the one hand, to tyranny, and on the other, to anarchy." The arrangement would have been happier thus: "A monarchy, limited like ours, may, for aught I know, be placed, as it has often been represented, just in the middle point," &c.

I shall give only one rule more, relating to the strength of a sentence; which is, that in the mem-

* "Let them be inserted wherever the happiest place for them can be found: as, in a structure composed of rough stones, there are always places where the most irregular and unshapely may find some adjacent one to which it can be joined, and some basis on which it may rest."

bers of a sentence, where two things are compared or contrasted to each other—where either a resemblance or an opposition is intended to be expressed. —Some resemblance, in the language and construction, should be preserved. For when the things themselves correspond to each other, we naturally expect to find the words corresponding too. We are disappointed when it is otherwise ; and the comparison, or contrast, appears more imperfect. Thus, when lord Bolingbroke says, “ The laughers will be for those who have most wit ; the serious part of mankind, for those who have most reason on their side ; ” (Dissert. on parties, Pref.) the opposition would have been more complete, if he had said, “ The laughers will be for those who have most wit ; the serious for those who have most reason on their side.” The following passage from mr. Pope’s preface to his Homer, fully exemplifies the rule I am now giving: “ Homer was the greater genius ; Virgil the better artist : in the one, we most admire the man ; in the other, the work. Homer hurries us with a commanding impetuosity ; Virgil leads us with an attractive majesty. Homer scatters with a generous profusion ; Virgil bestows with a careful magnificence. Homer, like the Nile, pours out his riches with a sudden overflow : Virgil, like a river in its banks, with a constant stream. And when we look upon their machines, Homer seems like his own Jupiter in his terrors, shaking Olympus, scattering the lightnings, and firing the heavens ; Virgil like the same power, in his benevolence, counselling with the gods, laying plans for empires, and ordering his whole creation.”—Periods thus constructed, when introduced with propriety, and not returning too often, have a sensible beauty. But we must beware of carrying our attention to this beauty too far. It ought only to

be occasionally studied, when comparison or opposition of objects naturally leads to it. If such a construction as this be aimed at in all our sentences, it leads to a disagreeable uniformity ; produces a regularly returning clink in the period, which tires the ear ; and plainly discovers affectation. Among the ancients, the style of Isocrates is faulty in this respect ; and, on that account, by some of their best critics, particularly by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, he is severely censured.

This finishes what I had to say concerning sentences, considered, with respect to their meaning, under the three heads, of perspicuity, unity, and strength. It is a subject on which I have insisted fully, for two reasons : First, because it is a subject, which, by its nature, can be rendered more didactic, and subjected more to precise rule, than many other subjects of criticism ; and next, because it appears to me of considerable importance and use.

For, though many of those attentions, which I have been recommending, may appear minute, yet their effect, upon writing and style, is much greater than might, at first, be imagined. A sentiment which is expressed in a period, clearly, neatly, and happily arranged, makes always a stronger impression on the mind, than one that is feeble or embarrassed. Every one feels this upon a comparison : and if the effect be sensible in one sentence, how much more in a whole discourse, or composition, that is made up of such sentences !

The fundamental rule of the construction of sentences, and into which all others might be resolved, undoubtedly is, to communicate, in the clearest and most natural order, the ideas which we mean to transfuse into the minds of others. Every arrangement that does most justice to the sense, and expresses it to most advantage, strikes

us as beautiful. To this point have tended all the rules I have given. And, indeed, did men always think clearly, and were they, at the same time, fully masters of the language in which they write, there would be occasion for few rules. Their sentences would then, of course, acquire all those properties of precision, unity, and strength, which I have recommended. For we may rest assured, that, whenever we express ourselves ill, there is, besides the mismanagement of language, for the most part, some mistake in our manner of conceiving the subject. Embarrassed, obscure, and feeble sentences, are generally, if not always, the result of embarrassed, obscure, and feeble thought. Thought and language act and re-act upon each other mutually. Logic and rhetoric have here, as in many other cases, a strict connexion; and he that is learning to arrange his sentences with accuracy and order, is learning, at the same time, to think with accuracy and order; an observation which alone will justify all the care and attention we have bestowed on this subject.

LECTURE XIII.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES, —HARMONY.

HITHERTO we have considered sentences, with respect to their meaning, under the heads of perspicuity, unity, and strength. We are now to consider them, with respect to their sound, their harmony, or agreeableness to the ear ; which was the last quality belonging to them that I proposed to treat of.

Sound is a quality much inferior to sense ; yet such as must not be disregarded. For, as long as sounds are the vehicle of conveyance for our ideas, there will be always a very considerable connexion between the idea which is conveyed, and the nature of the sound which conveys it. Pleasing ideas can hardly be transmitted to the mind, by means of harsh and disagreeable sounds. The imagination revolts as soon as it hears them uttered. " Nil," says Quintilian, " potest intrare in affectum, quod in aure, velut quodam vestibulo, statim offendit*." Music has naturally a great

* ' Nothing can enter into the affections, which stumbles at the threshold, by offending the ear."

power over all men, to prompt and facilitate certain emotions: insomuch, that there are hardly any dispositions which we wish to raise in others; but certain sounds may be found concordant to those dispositions, and tending to promote them: Now, language may, in some degree, be rendered capable of this power of music; a circumstance which must needs heighten our idea of language; as a wonderful invention: Not content with simply interpreting our ideas to others, it can give them those ideas enforced by corresponding sounds; and to the pleasure of communicated thought, can add the new and separate pleasure of melody.

In the harmony of periods, two things may be considered. First, agreeable sound, or modulation in general, without any particular expression: next, the sound so ordered, as to become expressive of the sense. The first is the more common; the second, the higher beauty.

First, let us consider agreeable sound, in general, as the property of well-constructed sentence: and, as it was of prose sentences we have hitherto treated, we shall confine ourselves to them under this head. This beauty of musical construction in prose, it is plain, will depend upon two things; the choice of words, and the arrangement of them.

I begin with the choice of words; on which head, there is not much to be said, unless I were to descend into a tedious and frivolous detail, concerning the powers of the several letters, or simple sounds, of which speech is composed. It is evident, that words are most agreeable to the ear, which are composed of smooth and liquid sounds, where there is a proper intermixture of vowels and consonants; without too many harsh consonants rubbing against each other; or too many open vowels in succession, to cause a hiatus, or disagree-

able aperture of the mouth. It may always be assumed as a principle, that, whatever sounds are difficult in pronunciation, are, in the same proportion, harsh and painful to the ear. Vowels give softness; consonants, strength to the sound of words. The music of language requires a just proportion of both; and will be hurt, will be rendered either grating or effeminate, by an excess of either. Long words are commonly more agreeable to the ear than monosyllables. They please it by the composition, or succession of sounds which they present to it; and, accordingly, the most musical languages abound most in them. Among words of any length, those are the most musical, which do not run wholly either upon long or short syllables, but are composed of an intermixture of them; such as, *repent, produce, velocity, celerity, independent, impetuosity.*

The next head, respecting the harmony which results from a proper arrangement of the words and members of a period, is more complex, and of greater nicety. For, let the words themselves be ever so well chosen, and well sounding, yet, if they be ill disposed, the music of the sentence is utterly lost. In the harmonious structure and disposition of periods, no writer whatever, ancient or modern, equals Cicero. He had studied this with care; and was fond, perhaps to excess, of what he calls, the "*Plena ac numerosa oratio.*" We need only open his writings, to find instances that will render the effect of musical language sensible to every ear. What, for example, can be more full, round, and swelling, than the following sentence of the 4th oration against Catiline? "*Cogitate, quantis laboribus fundatum imperium, quanta virtute stabilitam libertatem, quanta decorum benignitate auctas exaggeratasque fortunas, una nox pene delebit.*" In English, we may take,

For an instance of a musical sentence, the following from Milton, in his treatise on education : “ V. e
 “ shall conduct you to a hill-side, laborious, in-
 “ deed, at the first ascent ; but else, so smooth, so
 “ green, so full of goodly prospects, and melodi-
 “ ous sounds on every side, that the harp of Or-
 “ pheus was not more charming.” Every thing in
 this sentence conspires to promote the harmony.
 The words are happily chosen ; full of liquids and
 soft sounds ; *laborious, smooth, green, goodly, me-*
l odious, charming : and these words so artfully ar-
 ranged, that, were we to alter the collocation of
 any one of them, we should, presently, be sensible
 of the melody suffering. For, let us observe, how
 finely the members of the period swell one above
 another. “ So smooth, so green,—so full of good-
 “ ly prospects,—and melodious sounds on every
 “ side ;”—till the ear, prepared by this gradual
 rise, is conducted to that full close on which it rests
 with pleasure ;—“ that the harp of Orpheus was
 “ not more charming.”

The structure of periods, then, being susceptible
 of a very sensible melody, our next enquiry should
 be, how this melodious structure is formed, ~~what~~
 are the principles of it, and by what laws it is re-
 gulated ? And, upon this subject, were I to follow
 the ancient rhetoricians, it would be easy to give
 a great variety of rules. For here they have enter-
 ed into a very minute and particular detail, more
 particular, indeed, than on any other head that re-
 gards language. They hold, that to prose, as well
 as to verse, there belong certain numbers, less strict
 indeed, yet such as can be ascertained by rule.
 They go so far as to specify the feet, as they are
 called, that is, the succession of long and short syl-
 lables, which should enter into the different members
 of a sentence, and to show what the effect of each
 of these will be. Wherever they treat of the struc-

ture of sentences, it is always the music of them that makes the principal object. Cicero and Quintilian are full of this. The other qualities of precision, unity, and strength, which we consider as of chief importance, they handle slightly ; but when they come to the "*junctura et numerus*," the modulation and harmony, there they are copious. Diorysius of Halicarnassus, one of the most judicious critics of antiquity, has written a treatise on the composition of words in a sentence, which is altogether confined to their musical effect. He makes the excellency of a sentence to consist in four things : first, in the sweetness of single sounds ; secondly, in the composition of sounds, that is, the numbers or feet ; thirdly, in change or variety of sound ; and, fourthly, in sound suited to the sense. On all these points he writes with great accuracy and refinement ; and is very worthy of being consulted ; though, were one now to write a book on the structure of sentences, we should expect to find the subject treated of in a more extensive manner.

In modern times, this whole subject of the musical structure of discourse, it is plain, has been much less studied ; and, indeed, for several reasons, can be much less subjected to rule. The reasons, it will be necessary to give, both to justify my not following the track of the ancient rhetoricians on this subject, and to show how it has come to pass, that a part of composition, which *once* made so conspicuous a figure, now draws much less attention.

In the first place, the ancient languages, I mean the Greek and the Roman, were much more susceptible than ours, of the graces and the powers of melody. The quantities of their syllables were more fixed and determined ; their words were longer, and more sonorous ; their method of va-

rying the terminations of nouns and verbs, both introduced a greater variety of liquid sounds, and freed them from that multiplicity of little auxiliary words which we are obliged to employ ; and, what is of the greatest consequence, the inversions which their languages allowed, gave them the power of placing their words in whatever order was most suited to a musical arrangement. All these were great advantages which they enjoyed above us, for harmony of period.

In the next place, the Greeks and Romans, the former especially, were, in truth, much more musical nations than we ; their genius was more turned to delight in the melody of speech. Music is known to have been a more extensive art among them than it is with us ; more generally studied ; and applied to a greater variety of objects. Several learned men, particularly the abbe du Bos, in his reflexions on poetry and painting, have clearly proved, that the theatrical compositions of the ancients, both their tragedies and comedies, were set to a kind of music. Whence, the *Modos fecit*, and the *Tibiis dextris et sinistris*, prefixed to the editions of Terence's plays. All sort of declamation and public speaking, was carried on by them in a much more musical tone than it is among us. It approached to a kind of chanting or recitative. Among the Athenians, there was what was called the Nomic melody ; or a particular measure prescribed to the public officers, in which they were to promulgate the laws to the people ; lest by reading them with improper tones, the laws might be exposed to contempt. Among the Romans, there is a noted story of C. Gracchus, when he was declaiming in public, having a musician standing at his back, in order to give him the proper tones with a pipe or flute. Even when pronouncing those terrible tribunitial harangues, by which he inflamed the one half of

the citizens of Rome against the other, this attention to the music of speech was, in those times, it seems, thought necessary to success. Quintilian, though he condemns the excess of this sort of pronunciation, yet allows a "cantus obscurior" to be a beauty in a public speaker. Hence that variety of accents, acute, grave, and circumflex, which we find marked upon the Greek syllables; to express, not the quantity of them, but the tone in which they were to be spoken: the application of which is now wholly unknown to us. And though the Romans did not mark those accents in their writing, yet it appears from Quintilian, that they used them in pronunciation: "*Quantum, quale,*" says he, "*comparantes gravi, interrogantes acuto*" "*tenore concludunt.*" As music, then, was an object much more attended to in speech among the Greeks and Romans, than it is with us—as, in all kinds of public speaking, they employed a much greater variety of notes, of tones, or inflections of voice, than we use—this is one clear reason of their paying a greater attention to that construction of sentences, which might best suit this musical pronunciation.

It is farther known, that, in consequence of the genius of their languages, and of their manner of pronouncing them, the musical arrangement of sentences, did, in fact, produce a greater effect in public speaking among them, than it could possibly do in any modern oration; another reason why it deserved to be more studied. Cicero, in his treatise, entitled, *Orator*, tells us, "*Conciones sæpe*" "*exclamare vidi, cum verba apte cecidissent. Id*" "*enim expectant aures*.*" And he gives a remarkable instance of the effect of a harmonious period

* "I have often been witness to bursts of exclamation in the public assemblies, when sentences closed musically; for that is a pleasure which the ear expects."

upon a whole assembly, from a sentence of one of Carbo's orations, spoken in his hearing. The sentence was, "*Patris dictum sapiens temeritas filii comprobavit.*" By means of the sound of which alone, he tells us, "*Tantus clamor concionis excitatus est, ut prorsus admirabile esset.*" He makes us remark the feet, of which these words consist, to which he ascribes the power of the melody; and shows how, by altering the collocation, the whole effect would be lost; as thus: "*Patris dictum sapiens comprobavit temeritas filii.*" Now, though it be true that Carbo's sentence is extremely musical, and would be agreeable, at this day, to any audience, yet I cannot believe that an English sentence, equally harmonious, would, by its harmony alone, produce any such effect on a British audience, or excite any such wonderful applause and admiration, as Cicero informs us this of Carbo produced. Our northern ears are too coarse and obtuse. The melody of speech has less power over us; and by our simpler and plainer method of uttering words, speech is, in truth, accompanied with less melody than it was among the Greeks and Romans.*

For these reasons, I am of opinion, that it is vain to think of bestowing the same attention upon the harmonious structure of our sentences, that was bestowed by these ancient nations. The doctrine of the Greek and Roman critics, on this head, has misled some to imagine, that it might be equally applied to our tongue; and that our prose writing might be regulated by spondees and trochees, and iambus's and pœons, and other metrical feet. But, first,

* "*In versu quidem, theatra tota exclamant si fuit una syllaba aut brevior aut longior. Nec verò multitudo pedes novit; nec ullos numeros tenet; nec illud quod offendit, aut cur, aut in quo offendat, intelligit; et tamen omnium longitudo et brevitatum in sonis, sicut acutarum, graviumque vocum, judicium ipsa natura in auribus nostris collocavit.*"

our words cannot be measured, or, at least, can be measured very imperfectly by any feet of this kind. For, the quantity, the length and shortness of our syllables, is far from being so fixed and subjected to rule, as in the Greek and Roman tongues; but very often left arbitrary, and determined by the emphasis and the sense. Next, though our prose could admit of such metrical regulation, yet, from our plainer method of pronouncing all sort of discourse, the effect would not be at all so sensible to the ear, nor be relished with so much pleasure, as among the Greeks and Romans: and, lastly, this whole doctrine about the measures and numbers of prose, even as it is delivered by the ancient rhetoricians themselves, is, in truth, in a great measure loose and uncertain. It appears, indeed, that the melody of discourse was a matter of infinitely more attention to them, than ever it has been to the moderns. But, though they write a great deal about it, they have never been able to reduce it to any rules which could be of real use in practice. If we consult Cicero's *Orator*, where this point is discussed with the most minuteness, we shall see how much these ancient critics differed from one another, about the feet proper for the conclusion, and other parts of a sentence; and how much, after all, was left to the judgment of the ear. Nor, indeed, is it possible to give precise rules concerning this matter, in any language; as all prose composition must be allowed to run loose in its numbers; and, according as the tenor of a discourse varies, the modulation of sentences must vary infinitely.

But, although I apprehend, that this musical arrangement cannot be reduced into a system, I am far from thinking, that it is a quality to be neglected in composition. On the contrary, I hold its effect to be very considerable; and that every one who studies to write with grace, much more who

seeks to pronounce in public, with success, will be obliged to attend to it not a little. But it is his ear, cultivated by attention and practice, that must chiefly direct him. For any rules that can be given, on this subject, are very general. Some rules, however, there are, which may be of use to form the ear to the proper harmony of discourse. I proceed to mention such as appear to me most material.

There are two things, on which the music of a sentence chiefly depends. These are, the proper distribution of the several members of it; and the close or cadence of the whole.

First, I say, the distribution of the several members is to be carefully attended to. It is of importance to observe, that, whatever is easy and agreeable to the organs of speech, always sounds grateful to the ear. While a period is going on, the termination of each of its members forms a pause, or rest, in pronouncing: and these rests should be so distributed; as to make the course of the breathing easy, and, at the same time, should fall at such distances, as to bear a certain musical proportion to each other. This will be best illustrated by examples. The following sentence is from archbishop Tillotson: "This discourse, concerning the easiness of God's commands, does, all along, suppose and acknowledge the difficulties of the first entrance upon a religious course; except, only in those persons who have had the happiness to be trained up to religion by the easy and insensible degrees of a pious and virtuous education." Here there is no harmony; nay, there is some degree of harshness and unpleasantness; owing principally to this, that there is, properly, no more than one pause or rest in the sentence, falling betwixt the two members into which it is divided; each of which is so long, as

to occasion a considerable stretch of the breath in pronouncing it.

Observe, now, on the other hand, the ease with which the following sentence, from sir William Temple, glides along, and the graceful intervals at which the pauses are placed. He is speaking sarcastically of man: "but God be thanked, his
"pride is greater than his ignorance, and what
"he wants in knowledge, he supplies by sufficien-
"cy. When he has looked about him, as far as
"he can, he concludes, there is no more to be
"seen; when he is at the end of his line, he is at
"the bottom of the ocean; when he has shot his
"best, he is sure none ever did, or ever can, shoot
"better, or beyond it. His own reason he holds to
"be the certain measure of truth; and his own
"knowledge, of what is possible in nature*."

Here every thing is, at once, easy to the breath, and grateful to the ear; and, it is this sort of flowing measure, this regular and proportional division of the members of his sentences, which renders sir William Temple's style always agreeable. I must observe, at the same time, that a sentence, with too many rests, and these placed at intervals too apparently measured and regular, is apt to favour of affectation.

* Or this instance,—He is addressing himself to lady Essex, upon the death of her child: "I was once in hope, that what was so violent could not be long: but, when I observed your grief to grow stronger with age, and to increase, like a stream, the farther it ran—when I saw it draw out to such unhappy consequences, and to threaten, no less than your child, your health, and your life—I could no longer forbear this endeavour, nor end it, without begging of you, for God's sake, and for your own, for your children, and your friends, your country, and your family, that you would no longer abandon yourself to a disconsolate passion; but that you would, at length, awaken your piety, give way to your prudence, or, at least, rouse the invincible spirit of the Percys, that never yet shrunk at any disaster."

The next thing to be attended to, is, the close or cadence of the whole sentence, which, as it is always the part most sensible to the ear, demands the greatest care. So Quintilian : “ Non igitur durum sit, neque abruptum, quo animi, velut respirant ac reficiuntur. Hæc est sedes orationis ; hoc auditor expectat ; hic laus omnis declamat*.”

The only important rule that can be given here, is, that when we aim at dignity or elevation, the sound should be made to grow to the last ; the longest members of the period, and the fullest and most sonorous words, should be reserved to the conclusion. As an example of this, the following sentence of Mr. Addison's may be given : “ It fills the mind (speaking of sight) with the largest variety of ideas ; converses with its objects at the greatest distance ; and continues the longest in action, without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments.” Every reader must be sensible of a beauty here, both in the proper division of the members and pauses, and the manner in which the sentence is rounded, and conducted to a full and harmonious close.

The same holds in melody, that I observed to take place with respect to significancy ; that a falling off at the end, always hurts greatly. For this reason, particles, pronouns, and little words are as ungracious to the ear, at the conclusion, as I formerly showed they were inconsistent with strength of expression. It is more than probable, that the sense and the sound have here a mutual influence on each other. That which hurts the ear, seems to mar the strength of the meaning ; and that which really degrades the sense, in consequence of this

* “ Let there be nothing harsh or abrupt in the conclusion of the sentence, on which the mind pauses and rests. This is the most material part in the structure of discourse. Here every hearer expects to be gratified ; here his applause breaks forth.”

primary effect, appears also to have a bad sound. How disagreeable is the following sentence of an author, speaking of the trinity! "It is a mystery which we firmly believe the truth of, and humbly adore the depth of." And how easily might it have been mended by this transposition! "It is a mystery, the truth of which we firmly believe, and the depth of which we humbly adore." In general it seems to hold, that a musical close, in our language, requires either the last syllable, or the last but one, to be a long syllable. Words which consist mostly of short syllables, as, *contrary*, *particular*, *retrospect*, seldom conclude a sentence harmoniously, unless a run of long syllables, before, has rendered them agreeable to the ear.

It is necessary, however, to observe, that sentences, so constructed as to make the sound always swell and grow towards the end, and to rest either on a long or a penult long syllable, give a discourse the tone of declamation. The ear soon becomes acquainted with the melody, and is apt to be cloyed with it. If we would keep up the attention of the reader or hearer, if we would preserve vivacity and strength in our composition, we must be very attentive to vary our measures. This regards the distribution of the members, as well as the cadence of the period. Sentences, constructed in a similar manner, with the pauses falling at equal intervals, should never follow one another. Short sentences should be intermixed with long and swelling ones, to render discourse sprightly, as well as magnificent. Even discords, properly introduced, abrupt sounds, departures from regular cadence, have sometimes a good effect. Monotony is the great fault into which writers are apt to fall, who are fond of harmonious arrangement: and to have only one tune, or measure, is not much better than having none at all. A very vulgar ear will

enable a writer to catch some one melody, and to form the run of his sentences according to it; which soon proves disgusting. But a just and correct ear is requisite for varying and diversifying the melody: and hence we so seldom meet with authors, who are remarkably happy in this respect.

Though attention to the music of sentences must not be neglected, yet it must also be kept within proper bounds: for all appearances of an author's affecting harmony, are disagreeable; especially when the love of it betrays him so far, as to sacrifice, in any instance, perspicuity, precision, or strength of sentiment, to sound. All unmeaning words, introduced merely to round the period, or fill up the melody, *complementa numerorum*, as Cicero calls them, are great blemishes in writing. They are childish and puerile ornaments, by which a sentence always loses more in point of weight, than it can gain by such additions to the beauty of its sound. Sense has its own harmony, as well as sound; and, where the sense of a period is expressed with clearness, force, and dignity, it will seldom happen but the words will strike the ear agreeably; at least, a very moderate attention is all that is requisite for making the cadence of such a period pleasing: and the effect of greater attention is often no other, than to render composition languid and enervated. After all the labour which Quintilian bestows on regulating the measures of prose, he comes at last, with his usual good sense, to this conclusion: "In universum, si sit necesse, duram
" potius atque asperam compositionem malim esse,
" quam effeminatam ac enervem, qualis apud mul-
" tos. Ideoque, vincita quædam de industria sunt
" solvenda, ne laborata videantur; neque ullum
" idoneum aut aptum verbum prætermittamus,
" gratia lenitatis*." Lib. ix. c. 4.

* "Upon the whole, I would rather choose, that compo-

Cicero, as I before observed, is one of the most remarkable patterns of a harmonious style. His love of it, however, is too visible; and the pomp of his numbers sometimes detracts from his strength. That noted close of his, *esse videatur*, which, in the oration Pro lege Manilia, occurs eleven times, exposed him to censure among his contemporaries. We must observe, however, in defence of this great orator, that there is a remarkable union, in his style, of harmony with ease, which is always a great beauty: and if his harmony be studied, that study appears to have cost him little trouble.

Among our English classics, not many are distinguished for musical arrangement. Milton, in some of his prose works, has very finely turned periods; but the writers of his age indulged a liberty of inversion, which now would be reckoned contrary to purity of style: and though this allowed their sentences to be more stately and sonorous, yet it gave them too much of a latinized construction and order. Of later writers, Shaftsbury is, upon the whole, the most correct in his numbers. As his ear was delicate, he has attended to music in all his sentences; and he is peculiarly happy in this respect, that he has avoided the monotony into which writers, who study the grace of sound, are very apt to fall: having diversified his periods with great variety. Mr. Addison has also much harmony in his style; more easy and smooth, but less varied, than lord Shaftsbury. Sir William Tem-

“tion should appear rough and harsh, if that be necessary,
 “than that it should be enervated and effeminate, such as we
 “find the style of too many. Some sentences, therefore,
 “which we have studiously formed into melody, should be
 “thrown loose, that they may not seem too much laboured;
 “nor ought we ever to omit any proper or expressive word,
 “for the sake of smoothing a period.”

ple is, in general, very flowing and agreeable. Archbishop Tillotson is too often careless and languid ; and is much outdone by bishop Atterbury in the music of his periods. Dean Swift despised musical arrangement altogether.

Hitherto I have discoursed of agreeable sound, or modulation, in general. It yet remains to treat of a higher beauty of this kind ; the sound adapted to the sense. The former was no more than a simple accompaniment, to please the ear ; the latter supposes a peculiar expression given to the music. We may remark two degrees of it : First, the current of sound, adapted to the tenor of a discourse : next, a particular resemblance effected between some object, and the sounds that are employed in describing it.

First, I say, the current of sound may be adapted to the tenor of a discourse. Sounds have, in many respects, a correspondence with our ideas ; partly natural, partly the effect of artificial associations. Hence it happens, that any one modulation of sound continued, imprints on our style a certain character and expression. Sentences constructed with the Ciceronian fulness and swell, produce the impression of what is important, magnificent, sedate ; for this is the natural tone which such a course of sentiment assumes. But they suit no violent passion, no eager reasoning, no familiar address. These always require measures brisker, easier, and often more abrupt. And, therefore, to swell, or to let down the periods, as the subject demands, is a very important rule in oratory. No one tenor whatever, supposing it to produce no bad effect from satiety, will answer to all different compositions ; nor even to all the parts of the same composition. It were as absurd to write a panegyric, and an invective, in a style of the same

cadence, as to set the words of a tender love-song to the air of a warlike march.

Observe how finely the following sentence of Cicero is adapted, to represent the tranquillity and ease of a satisfied state : “ *Et si homini nihil est magis optandum quam prospera, æquabilis, perpetuaque fortuna, secundo vitæ sine ulla offensione cursu ; tamen, si mihi tranquilla et placata omnia fuissent, incredibili quadam et pene divina, qua nunc vestro beneficio, fruor, lætitiæ voluptate caruisssem* *.” Nothing was ever more perfect in its kind : it paints, if we may so speak, to the ear. But, who would not have laughed, if Cicero had employed such periods, or such a cadence as this, in inveighing against Mark Antony, or Catiline ? What is requisite, therefore, is, that we previously fix, in our mind, a just idea of the general tone of sound which suits our subject ; that is, which the sentiments we are to express, most naturally assume, and in which they most commonly vent themselves ; whether round and smooth, or stately and solemn, or brisk and quick, or interrupted and abrupt. This general idea must direct the modulation of our periods : to speak in the style of music, must give us the key note, must form the ground of the melody ; varied and diversified in parts, according as either our sentiments are diversified, or as is requisite for producing a suitable variety to gratify the ear.

It may be proper to remark, that our translators of the bible have often been happy in suiting their numbers to the subject. Grave, solemn, and majestic subjects undoubtedly require such an arrangement of words as runs much on long syllables ; and, particularly, they require the close to rest upon such. The very first verses of the bible, are remarkable

* Orat. ad Quirites, post reditum.

For this melody ; “ in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth ; and the earth was without form, and void ; and darkness was upon the face of the deep ; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” Several other passages, particularly some of the psalms, afford striking examples of this sort of grave, melodious construction. Any composition that rises considerably above the ordinary tone of prose, such as monumental inscriptions, and panegyrical characters, naturally runs into numbers of this kind.

But, in the next place, besides the general correspondence of the current of sound with the current of thought, there may be a more particular expression attempted, of certain objects, by means of resembling sounds. This can be, sometimes, accomplished in prose composition ; but there only in a more faint degree ; nor is it so much expected there. In poetry, chiefly, it is looked for ; where attention to sound is more demanded, and where the inversions and liberties of poetical style give us a greater command of sound ; assisted, too, by the versification, and that *cantus obscurior*, to which we are naturally led in reading poetry. This requires a little more illustration.

The sounds of words may be employed for representing, chiefly, three classes of objects ; first, other sounds ; secondly, motion ; and, thirdly, the emotions and passions of the mind.

First, I say, by a proper choice of words, we may produce a resemblance of other sounds which we mean to describe ; such as, the noise of waters, the roaring of winds, or the murmuring of streams. This is the simplest instance of this sort of beauty. For the medium through which we imitate, here, is a natural one ; sounds represented by other sounds ; and between ideas of the same sense, it is easy to form a connexion. No very great art is required

In a poet, when he is describing sweet and soft sounds, to make use of such words as have most liquids and vowels, and glide the softest; or, when he is describing harsh sounds, to throw together a number of harsh syllables which are of difficult pronunciation. Here the common structure of language assists him; for, it will be found, that, in most languages, the names of many particular sounds are so formed, as to carry some affinity to the sound which they signify; as with us, the *whistling* of winds, the *buzz* and *hum* of insects, the *hiss* of serpents, the *crash* of falling timber; and many other instances, where the word has been plainly framed upon the sound it represents. I shall produce a remarkable example of this beauty from Milton, taken from two passages in *Paradise Lost*, describing the sound made, in the one, by the opening of the gates of hell; in the other, by the opening of those of heaven. The contrast between the two, displays, to great advantage, the poet's art. The first is the opening of hell's gates:

——On a sudden, open fly,
With impetuous recoil, and jarring sound,
Th' infernal doors; and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder.——

B. I.

Observe, now, the smoothness of the other:

——Heaven opened wide
Her ever-during gates, harmonious sound,
On golden hinges turning.——

B. II.

The following beautiful passage from Tasso's *Gierusalemme*, has been often admired, on account of the imitation effected by sound of the thing represented:

Chiama gli habitator de l'ombre eterne
Il rauco suon de la Tartarea tromba:
Tremar le spaciose atre caverne,

Et l'aer ciêro a quel rumor rimbomba ;
 Ni stridendo così da le superne
 Regioni de le cielo, il folgor piomba ;
 Ne si scossa giammai la terra,
 Quand i vapori in sen gràvida setta.

CANT. IV. Stanz. 4.

The second class of objects, which the sound of words is often employed to imitate, is, motion ; as it is swift or slow, violent or gentle, equable or interrupted, easy or accompanied with effort. Though there be no natural affinity between sound, of any kind, and motion, yet, in the imagination, there is a strong one ; as appears from the connexion between music and dancing. And, therefore, here it is in the poet's power to give us a lively idea of the kind of motion he would describe, by means of sounds which correspond, in our imagination, with that motion. Long syllables naturally give the impression of slow motion ; as in this line of Virgil :

Olli inter sese magna vi brachia tollunt.

A succession of short syllables presents quick motion to the mind ; as,

Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.

Both Homer and Virgil are great masters of this beauty, and their works abound with instances of it ; most of them, indeed, so often quoted and so well known, that it is needless to produce them. I shall give one instance, in English, which seems happy. It is the description of a sudden calm on the seas, in a poem, entitled, *The Fleece*.

——— With easy course
 The vessels glide ; unless their speed be stopp'd
 By dead calms, that oft lie on these smooth seas

When ev'ry zephyr sleeps ; then the shrouds drop ;
 The downy feather, on the cordage hung,
 Moves not ; the flat sea shines like yellow gold
 Fus'd in the fire, or like the marble floor
 Of some old temple wide.

The third set of objects, which I mentioned the sound of words as capable of representing, consists of the passions and emotions of the mind. Sound may, at first view, appear foreign to these ; but, that here, also, there is some sort of connexion, is sufficiently proved by the power which music has to awaken, or to assist certain passions, and, according as its strain is varied, to introduce one train of ideas, rather than another. This, indeed, logically speaking, cannot be called a resemblance between the sense and the sound, seeing long or short syllables have no natural resemblance to any thought or passion. But if the arrangement of syllables, by their sound alone, recal one set of ideas more readily than another, and dispose the mind for entering into that affection which the poet means to raise, such arrangement may, justly enough, be said to resemble the sense, or be similar and correspondent to it. I admit, that, in many instances, which are supposed to display this beauty of accommodation of sound to the sense, there is much room for imagination to work ; and, according as a reader is struck by a passage, he will often fancy a resemblance between the sound and the sense, which others cannot discover. He modulates the numbers to his own disposition of mind ; and, in effect, makes the music which he imagines himself to hear. However, that there are real instances of this kind, and that poetry is capable of some such expression, cannot be doubted. Dryden's ode on St. Cecilia's day, affords a very beautiful exemplification of it in the English language. Without much study -

flexion, a poet, describing pleasure, joy, and agreeable objects, from the feeling of his subject, naturally runs into smooth, liquid, and flowing numbers.

——— *Namque ipsa decoram
Cæsariem nato genetrix, lumenque juventæ
Purpureum, et lætos oculis afflarat honores.*

ÆN. I.

Or,

*Devenere locos lætos et amena vireta
Fortunatorum nemorum, sedesque beatas;
Largior hic campos æther, et lumine vestit
Purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera norant.*

ÆN. VI.

Brisk and lively sensations exact quicker and more animated numbers.

——— *Juvenum manus emicat ardens
Littus in Hesperium.*

ÆN. VII.

Melancholy and gloomy subjects naturally express themselves in slow measures, and long words :

*In these deep solitudes and awful cells,
Where heavenly pensive contemplation dwells.*

Et caligantem nigra formidine lucum,

I have now given sufficient openings into this subject: a moderate acquaintance with the good poets, either ancient or modern, will suggest many instances of the same kind. And with this, I finish the discussion of the structure of sentences; having fully considered them under all the heads I mentioned; of perspicuity, unity, strength, and musical arrangement.

LECTURE XIV.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

HAVING now finished what related to the construction of sentences, I proceed to other rules concerning style. My general division of the qualities of style, was into perspicuity and ornament. Perspicuity, both in single words and in sentences, I have considered. Ornament, as far as it arises from a graceful, strong, or melodious construction of words, has also been treated of. Another, and a great branch of the ornament of style, is, figurative language ; which is now to be the subject of our consideration, and will require a full discussion.

Our first enquiry must be, what is meant by figures of speech*?

In general, they always imply some departure

* On the subject of figures of speech all the writers who treat of rhetoric or composition, have insisted largely. To make references, therefore, on this subject, were endless. On the foundations of figurative language, in general, one of the most sensible and instructive writers appears to me to be

from simplicity of expression ; the idea which we intend to convey, not only enunciated to others, but enunciated in a particular manner, and with some circumstance added, which is designed to render the impression more strong and vivid. When I say, for instance, " That a good man enjoys comfort in the midst of adversity ;" I just express my thought in the simplest manner possible. But when I say, " To the upright there ariseth light in darkness ;" the same sentiment is expressed in a figurative style ; a new circumstance is introduced ; light is put in the place of comfort, and darkness is used to suggest the idea of adversity. In the same manner, to say, " It is impossible, by any search we can make, to explore the divine nature fully," is to make a simple proposition. But when we say, " Canst thou, by searching, find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection ? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do ? deeper than hell, what canst thou know ?" This introduces a figure into style ; the proposition being not only expressed, but admiration and astonishment being expressed together with it.

But, though figures imply a deviation from what may be reckoned the most simple form of speech, we are not thence to conclude, that they imply any thing uncommon, or unnatural. This is so far from being the case, that, on very many occasions, they are both the most natural, and the most common method of uttering our sentiments. It is impossible to compose any discourse without using them often ; nay, there are few sentences of any

M. Marfais, in his *Traité des tropes, pour servir d'introduction à la rhétorique, et à la logique*. For observations on particular figures, the *Elements of criticism* may be consulted, where the subject is fully handled; and illustrated by a great variety of examples.

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length, in which some expression or other, that may be termed a figure, does not occur. From what causes this happens, shall be afterwards explained. The fact, in the mean time, shows, that they are to be accounted part of that language which nature dictates to men. They are not the invention of the schools, nor the mere product of study; on the contrary, the most illiterate speak in figures, as often as the most learned. Whenever the imaginations of the vulgar are much awakened, or their passions inflamed against one another, they will pour forth a torrent of figurative language, as forcible as could be employed by the most artificial declaimer.

What then is it, which has drawn the attention of critics and rhetoricians so much to these forms of speech? It is this: They remarked, that in them consists much of the beauty and the force of language; and found them always to bear some characters, or distinguishing marks, by the help of which they could reduce them under separate classes and heads. To this, perhaps, they owe their name of figures. As the figure, or shape of one body, distinguishes it from another, so these forms of speech have, each of them, a cast or turn peculiar to itself, which both distinguishes it from the rest, and distinguishes it from simple expression. Simple expression just makes our idea known to others; but figurative language, over and above, bestows a particular dress upon that idea—a dress, which both makes it to be remarked, and adorns it. Hence, this sort of language became early a capital object of attention to those who studied the powers of speech.

Figures, in general, may be described to be that language, which is prompted either by the imagination, or by the passions. The justness of this description will appear, from the more particular ac-

count I am afterwards to give of them. Rhetoricians commonly divide them into two great classes; figures of words, and figures of thought. The former, figures of words, are commonly called tropes, and consist in a word's being employed to signify something that is different from its original and primitive meaning; so that if you alter the word, you destroy the figure. Thus, in the instance I gave before, "Light ariseth to the upright in darkness;" the trope consists in "light and darkness," being not meant literally, but substituted for comfort and adversity, on account of some resemblance or analogy which they are supposed to bear to these conditions of life. The other class, termed figures of thought, supposes the words to be used in their proper and literal meaning, and the figure to consist in the turn of the thought; as is the case in exclamations, interrogations, apostrophes, and comparisons; where, though you vary the words that are used, or translate them from one language into another, you may, nevertheless, still preserve the same figure in the thought. This distinction, however, is of no great use; as nothing can be built upon it in practice; neither is it always very clear. It is of little importance, whether we give to some particular mode of expression the name of a trope, or of a figure; provided we remember, that figurative language always imports some colouring of the imagination, or some emotion of passion, expressed in our style: and, perhaps, figures of imagination, and figures of passion, might be a more useful distribution of the subject. But, without insisting on any artificial divisions, it will be more useful, that I enquire into the origin and nature of figures. Only, before I proceed to this, there are two general observations which it may be proper to premise.

The first is, concerning the use of rules with re-
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spect to figurative language. I admit, that persons may both speak and write with propriety, who know not the names of any of the figures of speech, nor ever studied any rules relating to them. Nature, as was before observed, dictates the use of figures ; and, like mons. Jourdain, in Moliere, who had spoken for forty years in prose, without ever knowing it, many a one uses metaphorical expressions to good purpose, without any idea of what a metaphor is. It will not, however, follow thence, that rules are of no service. All science arises from observations on practice. Practice has always gone before method and rule ; but method and rule have afterwards improved and perfected practice, in every art. We, every day, meet with persons who sing agreeably, without knowing one note of the gamut. Yet it has been found of importance to reduce these notes to a scale, and to form an art of music ; and it would be ridiculous to pretend, that the art is of no advantage, because the practice is founded in nature. Propriety and beauty of speech are certainly as improveable as the ear or the voice ; and to know the principles of this beauty, or the reasons which render one figure, or one manner of speech, preferable to another, cannot fail to assist and direct a proper choice.

But I must observe, in the next place, that, although this part of style merits attention, and is a very proper object of science and rule—although much of the beauty of composition depends on figurative language—yet we must beware of imagining that it depends solely, or even chiefly, upon such language. It is not so. The great place which the doctrine of tropes and figures has occupied in systems of rhetoric—the over-anxious care which has been shown in giving names to a vast variety of them, and in ranging them under different classes—has often led persons to imagine, that, if

their composition was well bespangled with a number of these ornaments of speech, it wanted no other beauty; whence has arisen much stiffness and affectation. For it is, in truth, the sentiment or passion, which lies under the figured expression, that gives it any merit. The figure is only the dress; the sentiment is the body and the substance. No figures will render a cold or an empty composition interesting; whereas, if a sentiment be sublime or pathetic, it can support itself perfectly well, without any borrowed assistance. Hence several of the most affecting and admired passages of the best authors, are expressed in the simplest language. The following sentiment from Virgil, for instance, makes its way at once to the heart, without the help of any figure whatever. He is describing an Argive, who falls in battle, in Italy, at a great distance from his native country:

*Sternitur, infelix, alieno vulnere, cœlumque
Aspicit, et dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos*.*

- “Anthares had from Argos travell’d far,
“Alcides’ friend, and brother of the war;
“Now falling, by another’s wound, his eyes
“He casts to heaven, on Argos thinks, and dies.”

In this translation, much of the beauty of the original is lost. “On Argos thinks, and dies,” is by no means equal to “dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos:” “As he dies, he remembers his beloved Argos.”—It is indeed observable, that in most of those tender and pathetic passages, which do so much honour to Virgil, that great poet expresses himself with the utmost simplicity; as,

*Te, dulcis conjux, te solo in littore secum,
Te veniente die, te decedente canebat.* GEORG. IV.

And so in that moving prayer of Evander, upon his parting with his son Pallas:

- At vos, O superi! et Divum tu maxime rector
• Jupiter, Arcadii quæso miserescite regis.

A single stroke of this kind, drawn as by the very pencil of nature, is worth a thousand figures. In the same manner, the simple style of scripture : " He spoke, and it was done ; he commanded, and " it stood fast."—" God said, let there be light ; and " there was light ;" imparts a lofty conception to much greater advantage, than if it had been decorated by the most pompous metaphors. The fact is, that the strong pathetic, and the pure sublime, not only have little dependence on figures of speech, but generally reject them. The proper region of these ornaments is, where a moderate degree of elevation and passion is predominant ; and there they contribute to the embellishment of discourse, only, when there is a basis of solid thought and natural sentiment ; when they are inserted in their proper place ; and when they rise, of themselves, from the subject, without being sought after.

Having premised these observations, I proceed to give an account of the origin and nature of figures ; principally of such as have their dependence on language ; including that numerous tribe, which the rhetoricians call tropes.

At the first rise of language, men would begin with giving names to the different objects which they discerned, or thought of. This nomenclature would, at the beginning, be very narrow. According as mens's ideas multiplied, and their acquaintance with objects increased, their stock of

Et patrias audite preces. Si numina vestra
Incolumem Pallanta mihi, si fata reservant,
Si visurus eum vivo, et venturus in unum,
Vitam oro ; patiar quemvis durare laborem !
Sin aliquem infandum casum, fortuna, minaris,
Nunc, O nunc liceat crudelem abruptere vitam !
Dum curæ ambigua dum spes incerta futuri ;
Dum te, chare puer ! mea fera et sola voluptas !
Amplexu teneo ; gravior ne nuncius aures
Vulneret—

names and words would increase also. But to the infinite variety of objects and ideas, no language is adequate. No language is so copious, as to have a separate word for every separate idea. Men naturally sought to abridge this labour of multiplying words *in infinitum*; and, in order to lay less burthen on their memories, made one word, which they had already appropriated to a certain idea or object, stand also for some other idea or object; between which and the primary one, they found, or fancied, some relation. Thus, the preposition, *in*, was originally invented to express the circumstance of place: "The man was killed *in* the wood." In progress of time, words were wanted to express men's being connected with certain conditions of fortune, or certain situations of mind; and some resemblance, or analogy, being fancied between these, and the place of bodies, the word, *in*, was employed to express men's being so circumstanced; as, one's being *in* health or *in* sickness, *in* prosperity or *in* adversity, *in* joy or *in* grief, *in* doubt, or *in* danger, or *in* safety. Here we see this preposition, *in*, plainly assuming a tropical signification, or carried off from its original meaning, to signify something else, which relates to, or resembles it.

Tropes of this kind abound in all languages; and are plainly owing to the want of proper words. The operations of the mind and affections, in particular, are, in most languages, described by words taken from sensible objects. The reason is plain. The names of sensible objects were, in all languages, the words most early introduced; and were, by degrees, extended to those mental objects, of which men had more obscure conceptions, and to which they found it more difficult to assign distinct names. They borrowed, therefore, the name of a sensible idea, where their imagination found

some affinity. Thus we speak of, a *piercing* judgment, and a *clear* head ; a *soft* or a *hard* heart ; a *rough* or a *smooth* behaviour. We say, *inflamed* by anger, *warmed* by love, *swelled* with pride, *melted* into grief ; and these are almost the only significant words which we have for such ideas.

But, although the barrenness of language, and the want of words, be doubtless one cause of the invention of tropes ; yet it is not the only, nor, perhaps, even the principal source of this form of speech. Tropes have arisen more frequently, and spread themselves wider, from the influence which imagination possesses over language. The train on which this has proceeded among all nations, I shall endeavour to explain.

Every object which makes any impression on the human mind, is constantly accompanied with certain circumstances and relations, that strike us at the same time. It never presents itself to our view, *isole*, as the French express it ; that is, independent on, and separated from, every other thing ; but always occurs as somehow related to other objects ; going before them, or following them ; their effect or their cause ; resembling them, or opposed to them ; distinguished by certain qualities, or surrounded with certain circumstances. By this means, every idea or object carries in its train some other ideas, which may be considered as its accessories. These accessories often strike the imagination more than the principal idea itself. They are, perhaps, more agreeable ideas ; or they are more familiar to our conceptions ; or they recal to our memory a greater variety of important circumstances. The imagination is more disposed to rest upon some of them ; and therefore, instead of using the proper name of the principal idea which it means to express, it employs, in its place, the name of the accessory or correspondent idea ; although the principal have

a proper and well-known name of its own. Hence a vast variety of tropical or figurative words obtain currency in all languages, through choice, not necessity; and men of lively imaginations are every day adding to their number.

Thus, when we design to intimate the period at which a state enjoyed most reputation or glory, it were easy to employ the proper words for expressing this; but as this is readily connected, in our imagination, with the flourishing period of a plant or a tree, we lay hold of this correspondent idea, and say, "The Roman empire flourished most under Augustus." The leader of a faction is plain language; but, because the head is the principal part of the human body, and is supposed to direct all the animal operations, resting upon this resemblance, we say, "Catiline was the head of the party." The word, *voice*, was originally invented to signify the articulate sound, formed by the organs of the mouth; but, as by means of it men signify their ideas and their intentions to each other, *voice* soon assumed a great many other meanings, all derived from this primary effect. "To give our voice" for any thing, signified to give our sentiment in favour of it. Not only so; but *voice* was transferred to signify any intimation of will or judgment, though given without the least interposition of voice, in its literal sense, or any sound uttered at all. Thus we speak of listening to the *voice* of conscience, the *voice* of nature, the *voice* of God. This usage takes place, not so much from barrenness of language, or want of a proper word, as from an allusion which we choose to make to *voice*, in its primary sense, in order to convey our idea, connected with a circumstance which appears to the fancy to give it more sprightliness and force.

The account which I have now given, and which

seems to be a full and fair one, of the introduction of tropes into all languages, coincides with what Cicero briefly hints, in his third book, de Oratore.

“ Modus transferendi verba late patet ; quam necessitas primum genuit, coacta inopia et angustis ; post autem delectatio, juvenilitasque colat ; bravit. Nam ut vestis frigoris depellendi causa reperta primo, post adhiberi coacta est ad ornamentum etiam corporis et dignitatem, sic verbi translationis instituta est inopiæ causa, frequentata, delectationis*.”

From what has been said, it clearly appears, how that must come to pass, which I had occasion to mention in a former lecture, that all languages are most figurative in their early state. Both the causes to which I ascribed the origin of figures, concur in producing this effect at the beginnings of society. Language is then most barren ; the stock of proper names, which have been invented for things, is small ; and, at the same time, imagination exerts great influence over the conceptions of men, and their method of uttering them ; so that, both from necessity, and from choice, their speech will, at that period, abound in tropes. For the savage tribes of men are always much given to wonder and astonishment. Every new object surprises, terrifies, and makes a strong impression on their mind ; they are governed by imagination and passion, more than by reason ; and, of course, their speech must be deeply tinged by their genius. In fact, we find, that this is the character of the American and In-

* “ The figurative usage of words is very extensive ; an usage to which necessity first gave rise, on account of the paucity of words, and barrenness of language ; but which the pleasure that was found in it afterwards rendered frequent. For, as garments were first contrived to defend our bodies from the cold, and afterwards were employed for the purpose of ornament and dignity, so figures of speech, introduced by want, were cultivated for the sake of entertainment.”

dian languages; bold, picturesque, and metaphorical; full of strong allusions to sensible qualities, and to such objects as struck them most in their wild and solitary life. An Indian chief makes a harangue to his tribe, in a style full of stronger metaphors than an European would use in an epic poem.

As language makes gradual progress towards refinement, almost every object comes to have a proper name given to it, and perspicuity and precision are more studied. But, still, for the reasons before given, borrowed words, or, as rhetoricians call them, tropes, must continue to occupy a considerable place. In every language, too, there are a multitude of words, which, though they were figurative in their first application to certain objects, yet, by long use, lose that figurative power wholly, and come to be considered as simple and literal expressions. In this case, are the terms which I remarked before, as transferred from sensible qualities to the operations or qualities of the mind, a *piercing* judgment, a *clear* head, a *hard* heart, and the like. There are other words which remain in a sort of middle state; which have neither lost wholly their figurative application, nor yet retain so much of it, as to imprint any remarkable character of figured language on our style; such as these phrases, "apprehend one's meaning;" "enter on a subject;" "follow out an argument;" "stir up strife;" and a great many more, of which our language is full. In the use of such phrases, correct writers will always preserve a regard to the figure or allusion on which they are founded, and will be careful not to apply them in any way that is inconsistent with it. One may be "sheltered under the patronage of a great man;" but it were wrong to say, "sheltered under the masque of dissimulation;" as a masque conceals, but does not shelter. An object;

in description, may be "clothed," if you will, "with epithets;" but it is not so proper to speak of its being "clothed with circumstances;" as the word "circumstances," alludes to standing round, not to clothing. Such attentions as these, to the propriety of language, are requisite in every composition.

What has been said on this subject, tends to throw light on the nature of language in general; and will lead to the reasons, why tropes or figures contribute to the beauty and grace of style.

First, They enrich language, and render it more copious. By their means, words and phrases are multiplied for expressing all sorts of ideas; for describing even the minutest differences; the nicest shades and colours of thought; which no language could possibly do by proper words alone, without assistance from tropes.

Secondly, They bestow dignity upon style. The familiarity of common words, to which our ears are much accustomed, tends to degrade style. When we want to adapt our language to the tone of an elevated subject, we should be greatly at a loss, if we could not borrow assistance from figures; which, properly employed, have a similar effect on language, with what is produced by the rich and splendid dress of a person of rank; to create respect, and to give an air of magnificence to him who wears it. Assistance of this kind is often needed in prose compositions; but poetry could not subsist without it. Hence figures form the constant language of poetry. To say, that "the sun rises," is trite and common; but it becomes a magnificent image when expressed, as Mr. Thomson has done:

But yonder comes the powerful king of day
Rejoicing in the east.—

To say, that "all men are subject alike to death,"

presents only a vulgar idea ; but it rises and fills the imagination, when painted thus by Horace :

*Pallida mors æquo pulsât pede, pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres.*

Or,

*Omnes eodem cogimur ; omnium,
Versatur urna, serius, ocyus,
Sors exitura, et nos in eternum
Exilium impositura cymbæ*.*

In the third place, figures give us the pleasure of enjoying two objects presented together to our view, without confusion ; the principal idea, which is the subject of the discourse, along with its accessory, which gives it the figurative dress. We see one thing in another, as Aristotle expresses it ; which is always agreeable to the mind. For there is nothing with which the fancy is more delighted, than with comparisons, and resemblances of objects ; and all tropes are founded upon some relation or analogy between one thing and another. When, for instance, in place of "youth," I say, the "morning of life," the fancy is immediately entertained with all the resembling circumstances which presently occur between these two objects. At one moment, I have in my eye a certain period of human life, and a certain time of the day, so related to each other, that the imagination plays between them with pleasure, and contemplates two similar objects, in one view, without embarrassment or confusion. Not only so, but,

In the fourth place, figures are attended with this farther advantage, of giving us frequently a much

*With equal pace, impartial fate
Knocks at the palace, as the cottage gate.*

*We all must tread the paths of fate ;
And ever shakes the mortal urn :
Whose lot embarks us, soon or late,
On Charon's boat : ah ! never to return.*

FRANCIS.

clearer and more striking view of the principal object, than we could have, if it were expressed in simple terms, and divested of its accessory idea. This is, indeed, their principal advantage, in virtue of which, they are very properly said to illustrate a subject, or to throw light upon it. For they exhibit the object, on which they are employed, in a picturesque form ; they can render an abstract conception, in some degree, an object of sense ; they surround it with such circumstances, as enable the mind to lay hold of it steadily, and to contemplate it fully. " Those persons," says one, " who gain the hearts of most people, who are chosen as the companions of their softer hours, and their reliefs from anxiety and care, are seldom persons of shining qualities, or strong virtues : it is rather the soft green of the soul, on which we rest our eyes, that are fatigued with beholding more glaring objects." Here, by a happy allusion to a colour, the whole conception is conveyed clear and strong to the mind in one word. By a well-chosen figure, even conviction is assisted, and the impression of a truth upon the mind, made more lively and forcible than it would otherwise be. As in the following illustration of dr. Young's : " When we dip too deep in pleasure, we always stir a sediment that renders it impure and noxious ;" or in this, " a heart boiling with violent passions, will always send up insatiating fumes to the head." An image that presents so much congruity between a moral and a sensible idea, serves like an argument from analogy, to enforce what the author asserts, and to induce belief.

Besides, whether we are endeavouring to raise sentiments of pleasure or aversion, we can always heighten the emotion by the figures which we introduce ; leading the imagination to a train, either of

agreeable or disagreeable, of exalting or debasing ideas, correspondent to the impression which we seek to make. When we want to render an object beautiful, or magnificent, we borrow images from all the most beautiful or splendid scenes of nature; we thereby naturally throw a lustre over our object; we enliven the reader's mind, and dispose him to go along with us, in the gay and pleasing impressions which we give him of the subject. This effect of figures is happily touched in the following lines of dr. Akenfide, and illustrated by a very sublime figure :

———— Then the inexpressive strain
Diffuses its enchantment. Fancy dreams
Of sacred fountains and Elysian groves,
And vales of bliss. The intellectual power
Bends from his awful throne a wond'ring ear,
And smiles.—— Pleas. of imaginat. I. 124.

What I have now explained, concerning the use and effects of figures, naturally leads us to reflect on the wonderful power of language; and, indeed, we cannot reflect on it without the highest admiration. What a fine vehicle is it now become for all the conceptions of the human mind; even for the most subtle and delicate workings of the imagination! What a pliant and flexible instrument in the hand of one who can employ it skilfully; prepared to take every form which he chooses to give it! Not content with a simple communication of ideas and thoughts, it paints those ideas to the eye; it gives colouring and relieve, even to the most abstract conceptions. In the figures which it uses, it sets mirrors before us, where we may behold objects, a second time, in their likeness. It entertains us, as with a succession of the most splendid pictures; disposes, in the most artificial manner, of the light and shade, for viewing every thing to the best advantage; in fine,

from being a rude and imperfect interpreter of men's wants and necessities, it has now passed into an instrument of the most delicate and refined luxury.

To make these effects of figurative language sensible, there are few authors in the English language, whom I can refer to with more advantage than mr. Addison, whose imagination is, at once, remarkably rich, and remarkably correct and chaste. When he is treating, for instance, of the effect which light and colours have to entertain the fancy, considered in mr. Locke's view of them as secondary qualities, which have no real existence in matter, but are only ideas in the mind, with what beautiful painting has he adorned this philosophic speculation! "Things," says he, "would make
 " but a poor appearance to the eye, if we saw
 " them only in their proper figures and motions.
 " Now, we are every where entertained with
 " pleasing shows and apparitions; we discover
 " imaginary glories in the heavens, and in the
 " earth, and see some of this visionary beauty
 " poured out upon the whole creation. But what
 " a rough unsightly sketch of nature should we
 " be entertained with, did all her colouring disappear, and the several distinctions of light and
 " shade vanish? In short, our souls are, at present,
 " delightfully lost, and bewildered in a pleasing delusion: and we walk about like the enchanted
 " hero of a romance, who sees beautiful castles,
 " woods, and meadows; and, at the same time,
 " hears the warbling of birds, and the purling of
 " streams; but, upon the finishing of some secret
 " spell, the fantastic scene breaks up, and the dis-
 " consolate knight finds himself on a barren heath,
 " or in a solitary desert. It is not improbable, that
 " something like this may be the state of the soul
 " after its first separation, in respect of the

“ images it will receive from matter.” No. 413. Spectator.

Having thus explained, at sufficient length, the origin, the nature, and effects of tropes, I should proceed next to the several kinds and divisions of them. But, in treating of these, were I to follow the common track of the scholastic writers on rhetoric, I should soon become tedious, and, I apprehend, useless, at the same time. Their great business has been, with a most patient and frivolous industry, to branch them out under a vast number of divisions, according to all the several modes in which a word may be carried from its literal meaning, into one that is figurative, without doing any more; as if the mere knowledge of the names and classes of all the tropes that can be formed, could be of any advantage towards the proper or graceful use of language. All that I purpose is, to give, in a few words, before finishing this lecture, a general view of the several sources whence the tropical meaning of words is derived: after which I shall, in subsequent lectures, descend to a more particular consideration of some of the most considerable figures of speech, and such as are in most frequent use; by treating of which, I shall give all the instruction I can, concerning the proper employment of figurative language, and point out the errors and abuses, which are apt to be committed in this part of style.

All tropes, as I before observed, are founded on the relation which one object bears to another; in virtue of which, the name of the one can be substituted instead of the name of the other; and by such a substitution, the vivacity of the idea is commonly meant to be increased. These relations, some more, some less intimate, may all give rise to tropes. One of the first and most obvious relations, is that between a cause and its effect. Hence,

THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF LECT. XIV.

in figurative language, the cause is, sometimes, put for the effect. Thus, mr. Addison, writing of Italy :

Blossoms, and fruits, and flowers together rise,
And the whole year in gay confusion lies.

where the "whole year" is plainly intended, to signify the effects or productions of all the seasons of the year. At other times, again, the effect is put for the cause ; as, "grey hairs" frequently for old age, which causes grey hairs ; and "shade," for trees that produce the shade. The relation between the container and the thing contained, is also so intimate and obvious, as naturally to give rise to tropes :

——Ille impiger hausit
Spumantem pateram, et pleno se proluit auro.

Where every one sees, that the cup and the gold are put for the liquor that was contained in the golden cup. In the same manner, the name of any country, is often used to denote the inhabitants of that country ; and heaven, very commonly employed to signify God, because he is conceived as dwelling in heaven. To implore the assistance of heaven, is the same as to implore the assistance of God. The relation betwixt any established sign and the thing signified, is a further source of tropes. Hence,

Cedant arma togæ ; concedat laurea linguæ.

The "toga," being the badge of the civil professions, and the "laurel," of military honours, the badge of each is put for the civil and military characters themselves. To "assume the sceptre," is a common phrase for entering on royal authority. To tropes, founded on these several relations, of cause.

and effect, container and contained, sign and thing signified, is given the name of metonymy.

When the trope is founded on the relation between an antecedent and a consequent, on what goes before, and immediately follows, it is then called a metalepsis; as in the Roman phrase, of "Fuit," or "Vixit," to express that one was dead. "Fuit Ilium et ingens gloria Dardanidum," signifies, that the glory of Troy is now no more.

When the whole is put for a part, or a part for the whole; a genus for a species, or a species for a genus; the singular for the plural, or the plural for the singular number; in general, when any thing less, or any thing more, is put for the precise object meant; the figure is then called a synecdoche. It is very common, for instance, to describe a whole object by some remarkable part of it; as, when we say, "a fleet of so many sail," in the place of "ships;" when we use the "head" for the "person," the "pole" for the "earth," the "waves" for the "sea". In like manner, an attribute may be put for a subject; as, "youth and beauty," for "the young and beautiful;" and sometimes a subject for its attribute. But it is needless to insist longer on this enumeration, which serves little purpose. I have said enough, to give an opening into that great variety of relations between objects, by means of which, the mind is assisted to pass easily from one to another; and by the name of the one understands the other to be meant. It is always some accessory idea, which recalls the principal to the imagination; and commonly recalls it with more force, than if the principal idea had been expressed.

The relation which is far the most fruitful of tropes, I have not yet mentioned; that is, the relation of similitude and resemblance. On this is founded what is called the metaphor: when, in

place of using the proper name of any object, we employ, in its place, the name of some other which is like it; which is a sort of picture of it, and which thereby awakens the conception of it with more force or grace. This figure is more frequent than all the rest put together; and the language, both of prose and verse, owes to it much of its elegance and grace. This, therefore, deserves very full and particular consideration; and shall be the subject of the next lecture.

LECTURE XV.

METAPHOR.

AFTER the preliminary observations I have made, relating to figurative language in general, I come now to treat separately of such figures of speech, as occur most frequently, and require particular attention : and I begin with metaphor. This is a figure founded entirely on the resemblance which one object bears to another. Hence, it is much allied to simile, or comparison ; and is indeed no other than a comparison, expressed in an abridged form. When I say of some great minister, " that he upholds the state, like a pillar " which supports the weight of a whole edifice," I fairly make a comparison ; but when I say of such a minister, " that he is the pillar of the state," it is now become a metaphor. The comparison betwixt the minister and a pillar, is made in the mind ; but is expressed without any of the words that denote comparison. The comparison is only insinuated, not expressed : the one object is supposed to be so like the other, that, without formally drawing the comparison, the name of the one may be

put in the place of the name of the other. "The minister is the pillar of the state." This, therefore, is a more lively and animated manner of expressing the resemblances which imagination traces among objects. There is nothing which delights the fancy more, than this act of comparing things together, discovering resemblances between them, and describing them by their likenesses. The mind, thus employed, is exercised without being fatigued; and is gratified with the consciousness of its own ingenuity. We need not be surprised, therefore, at finding all language tinged strongly with metaphor. It insinuates itself even into familiar conversation; and, unsought, rises up of its own accord in the mind. The very words which I have casually employed in describing this, are a proof of what I say; *tinged, insinuates, rises up*, are all of them metaphorical expressions, borrowed from some resemblance which fancy forms between sensible objects, and the internal operations of the mind; and yet the terms are no less clear, and, perhaps, more expressive, than if words had been used, which were to be taken in the strict and literal sense.

Though all metaphor imports comparison, and, therefore, is, in that respect, a figure of thought; yet, as the words in a metaphor are not taken literally, but changed from their proper to a figurative sense, the metaphor is commonly ranked among tropes or figures of words. But, provided the nature of it be well understood, it signifies very little whether we call it a figure or a trope. I have confined it to the expression of resemblance between two objects. I must remark, however, that the word metaphor is sometimes used in a looser and more extended sense—for the application of a term in any figurative signification, whether the figure be founded on resemblance, or on some

other relation, which two objects bear to one another. For instance; when grey hairs are put for old age, as, "to bring one's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave;" some writers would call this a metaphor, though it is not properly one, but what rhetoricians call a metonymy; that is, the effect put for the cause: "grey hairs" being the effect of old age, but not bearing any sort of resemblance to it. Aristotle, in his poetics, uses metaphor in this extended sense, for any figurative meaning imposed upon a word; as a whole put for the part, or a part for the whole; a species for the genus, or a genus for the species. But it would be unjust to tax this most acute writer with any inaccuracy on this account; the minute subdivisions, and various names of tropes, being unknown in his days, and the invention of later rhetoricians. Now, however, when these divisions are established, it is inaccurate to call every figurative use of terms, promiscuously, a metaphor.

Of all the figures of speech, none comes so near to painting as metaphor. Its peculiar effect is to give light and strength to description; to make intellectual ideas, in some sort, visible to the eye, by giving them colour, and substance, and sensible qualities. In order to produce this effect, however, a delicate hand is required: for, by a very little inaccuracy, we are in hazard of introducing confusion, in place of promoting perspicuity. Several rules, therefore, are necessary to be given for the proper management of metaphors. But, before entering on these, I shall give one instance of a very beautiful metaphor, that I may show the figure to full advantage. I shall take my instance from Lord Bolingbroke's remarks on the history of England. Just at the conclusion of his work, he is speaking of the behaviour of Charles I. to his last parliament; "In a word," says he, "about a

“ month after their meeting, he dissolved them ;
 “ and, as soon as he had dissolved them, he repent-
 “ ed ; but he repented too late of his rashness.
 “ Well might he repent ; for the vessel was now
 “ full, and this last drop made the waters of bit-
 “ terness overflow.” “ Here,” he adds, “ we draw
 “ the curtain, and put an end to our remarks.”

Nothing could be more happily thrown off. The metaphor, we see, is continued through several expressions. The *vessel* is put for the state or temper of the nation, already *full*, that is, provoked to the highest by former oppressions and wrongs ; this *last drop* stands for the provocation recently received by the abrupt dissolution of the parliament ; and the *overflowing of the waters of bitterness*, beautifully expresses all the effects of resentment let loose by an exasperated people.

On this passage, we may make two remarks in passing. The one, that nothing forms a more spirited and dignified conclusion of a subject, than a figure of this kind happily placed at the close. We see the effect of it, in this instance. The author goes off with a good grace ; and leaves a strong and full impression of his subject on the reader's mind. My other remark is, the advantage which a metaphor frequently has above a formal comparison. How much would the sentiment here have been enfeebled, if it had been expressed in the style of a regular simile, thus : “ Well might he repent ; for the state of the nation, loaded with grievances and provocations, resembled a vessel that was now full ; and this superadded provocation, like the last drop infused, made their rage and resentment, as waters of bitterness, overflow.” It has infinitely more spirit and force as it now stands, in the form of a metaphor. “ Well might he repent ; for the vessel was now full ; and this last drop made the waters of bitterness overflow.”

Having mentioned, with applause, this instance from lord Bolingbroke, I think it incumbent on me here to take notice, that, though I may have recourse to this author, sometimes, for examples of style, it is his style only, and not his sentiments, that deserve praise. It is, indeed, my opinion, that there are few writings in the English language, which, for the matter contained in them, can be read with less profit or fruit, than lord Bolingbroke's works. His political writings have the merit of a very lively and eloquent style; but they have no other; being, as to the substance, the mere temporary productions of faction and party; no better, indeed, than pamphlets written for the day. His posthumous, or, as they are called, his philosophical works, wherein he attacks religion, have still less merit; for they are as loose in the style, as they are flimsy in the reasoning. An unhappy instance, this author is, of parts and genius so miserably perverted by faction and passion, that as his memory will descend to posterity with little honour, so his productions will soon pass, and are, indeed, already passing into neglect and oblivion.

Returning from this digression to the subject before us, I proceed to lay down the rules to be observed in the conduct of metaphors; and which are much the same for tropes of every kind.

The first which I shall mention, is, that they be suited to the nature of the subject, of which we treat; neither too many, nor too gay, nor too elevated for it: that we neither attempt to force the subject, by means of them, into a degree of elevation which is not congruous to it; nor, on the other hand, allow it to sink below its proper dignity. This is a direction which belongs to all figurative language, and should be ever kept in view. Some metaphors are allowable, nay, beautiful, in

poetry, which it would be absurd and unnatural to employ in prose ; some may be graceful in orations, which would be very improper in historical, or philosophical composition. We must remember, that figures are the dress of our sentiments. As there is a natural congruity between dress, and the character or rank of the person who wears it, a violation of which congruity never fails to hurt ; the same holds precisely as to the application of figures to sentiment. The excessive or unseasonable employment of them, is mere foppery in writing. It gives a boyish air to composition ; and, instead of raising a subject, in fact, diminishes its dignity. For, as in life, true dignity must be founded on character, not on dress and appearance, so the dignity of composition must arise from sentiment and thought, not from ornament. The affectation and parade of ornament, detracts as much from an author, as they do from a man. Figures and metaphors, therefore, should, on no occasion, be stuck on too profusely ; and never should be such as refuse to accord with the strain of our sentiment. Nothing can be more unnatural, than for a writer to carry on a train of reasoning, in the same sort of figurative language which he would use in description. When he reasons, we look only for perspicuity ; when he describes, we expect embellishment ; when he divides, or relates, we desire plainness and simplicity. One of the greatest secrets in composition, is, to know when to be simple. This always gives a heightening to ornament, in its proper place. The right disposition of the shade, makes the light and colouring strike the more : “ *Is enim est eloquens,*” says Cicero, “ *qui et humilia subtiliter, et magna graviter, et mediocria temperate potest dicere.—Nam qui nihil potest tranquille, nihil leniter, nihil definite, distincte, potest dicere, is, cum non præparatis auribus inflammare res*

“capit, furere apud sanos, et quasi inter sobrios
 “bacchari temulentus videtur*.” This admonition should be particularly attended to by young practitioners in the art of writing, who are apt to be carried away by an undistinguishing admiration of what is showy and florid, whether in its place or not†.

The second rule, which I give, respects the choice of objects, from whence metaphors, and other figures, are to be drawn. The field for figurative language is very wide. All nature, to speak in the style of figures, opens its stores to us, and admits us to gather, from all sensible objects, whatever can illustrate intellectual or moral ideas. Not only the gay and splendid objects of sense, but the grave, the terrifying, and even the gloomy and dismal, may, on different occasions, be introduced

* “He is truly eloquent, who can discourse of humble subjects in a plain style, who can treat important ones with dignity, and speak of things, which are of a middle nature, in a temperate strain. For one who, upon no occasion, can express himself in a calm, orderly, distinct manner, when he begins to be on fire before his readers are prepared to kindle along with him, has the appearance of raving like a madman among persons who are in their senses, or of reeling like a drunkard in the midst of sober company.”

† What person, of the least taste, can bear the following passage, in a late historian? He is giving an account of the famous act of parliament against irregular marriages in England: “The bill,” says he, “underwent a great number of alterations and amendments, which were not effected without violent contest.” This is plain language, suited to the subject; and we naturally expect, that he should go on in the same strain, to tell us, that, after these contests, it was carried by a great majority of voices, and obtained the royal assent. But how does he express himself in finishing the period? “At length, however, it was floated through both houses, on the tide of a great majority, and steered into the safe harbour of royal approbation.” Nothing can be more puerile than such language. Smollet’s history of England, as quoted in the critical review for Oct. 1761, p. 251.

into figures with propriety. But we must beware of ever using such allusions as raise in the mind disagreeable, mean, vulgar, or dirty ideas. Even when metaphors are chosen in order to vilify and degrade any object, an author should study never to be nauseous in his allusions. Cicero blames an orator of his time, for terming his enemy "Stercus Curiae;" "quamvis sit simile," says he, "tamen est deformis cogitatio similitudinis." But, in subjects of dignity, it is an unpardonable fault to introduce mean and vulgar metaphors. In the treatise on the art of sinking, in dean Swift's works, there is a full and humorous collection of instances of this kind, wherein authors, instead of exalting, have contrived to degrade, their subjects by the figures they employed. Authors of greater note than those which are there quoted, have, at times, fallen into this error. Archbishop Tillotson, for instance, is sometimes negligent in his choice of metaphors; as, when speaking of the day of judgment, he describes the world, as "cracking about the sinners' ears." Shakespeare, whose imagination was rich and bold, in a much greater degree than it was delicate, often fails here. The following, for example, is a gross transgression; in his Henry V. having mentioned a dunghill, he presently raises a metaphor from the stench of it; and on a subject, too, that naturally led to much nobler ideas:

And those that leave their valiant bones in France,
Dying like men, though buried in your dunghills,
They shall be fam'd: for there the sun shall greet them,
And draw their honours reeking up to heaven.

Act IV. Sc. 8.

In the third place, as metaphors should be drawn from objects of some dignity, so particular care should be taken that the resemblance, which is the

foundation of the metaphor, be clear and perspicuous, not far-fetched, nor difficult to discover. The transgression of this rule makes, what are called, harsh or forced metaphors, which are always displeasing, because they puzzle the reader, and instead of illustrating the thought, render it perplexed and intricate. With metaphors of this kind, Cowley abounds. He, and some of the writers of his age, seem to have considered it as the perfection of wit, to hit upon likenesses between objects, which no other person could have discovered; and, at the same time, to pursue those metaphors so far, that it requires some ingenuity to follow them out, and comprehend them. This makes a metaphor resemble an ænigma; and is the very reverse of Cicero's rule on this head: "*verecunda debet esse translatio; ut deducta esse in alienum locum, non irruisse, atque ut voluntario non vi venisse, videatur**." How forced and obscure, for instance, are the following verses of Cowley, speaking of his mistress:

Woe to her stubborn heart, if once mine come

Into the self-same room,

'Twill tear and blow up all within,

Like a granada, shot into a magazine.

Then shall love keep the ashes and torn parts

Of both our broken hearts;

Shall out of both one new one make;

From her's th' alloy, from mine the metal take;

For of her heart, he from the flames will find

But little left behind;

Mine only will remain entire;

No dross was there, to perish in the fire.

In this manner he addresses sleep:

In vain, thou drowsy God, I thee invoke;

For thou, who dost from fumes arise,

* "Every metaphor should be modest, so that it may carry the appearance of having been led, not of having forced itself into the place of that word whose room it occupies; that it may seem to have come thither of its own accord, and not by constraint." *De oratore*, lib. iii. c. 53.

Thou, who man's soul dost overshadow,
 With a thick cloud by vapours made ;
 Canst have no power to shut his eyes,
 Whose flame's so pure, that it sends up no smoke ;
 Yet how do tears but from some vapours rise ?
 Tears that bewinter all my year ;
 The fate of Egypt I sustain,
 And never feel the dew of rain,
 From clouds which in the head appear ;
 But all my too much moisture owe
 To overflowings of the heart below*.

Trite and common resemblances should indeed be avoided in our metaphors. To be new, and not vulgar, is a beauty. But when they are fetched from some likeness too remote, and lying too far out of the road of ordinary thought, then, besides their obscurity, they have also the disadvantage of appearing laboured, and, as the French call it "*recherche*:" whereas metaphor, like every other ornament, loses its whole grace, when it does not seem natural and easy.

It is but a bad and ungraceful softening, which writers sometimes use for a harsh metaphor, when they palliate it with the expression, *as it were*. This is but an awkward parenthesis ; and metaphors, which need this apology of an *as it were*, would, generally, have been better omitted. Metaphors, too, borrowed from any of the sciences, especially such of them as belong to particular professions, are almost always faulty by their obscurity.

In the fourth place, it must be carefully attended to, in the conduct of metaphors, never to jumble metaphorical and plain language together ; never to construct a period so, that part of it must be understood metaphorically, part literally : which always produces a most disagreeable confusion. Instances, which are but too frequent, even in good

* See an excellent criticism on this sort of metaphysical poetry, in dr. Johnson's life of Cowley.

authors, will make this rule, and the reason of it, be clearly understood. In mr. Pope's translation of the *Odyssey*, *Penelope*, bewailing the abrupt departure of her son *Telemachus*, is made to speak thus :

Long to my joys my dearest lord is lost,
His country's buckler, and the Grecian boast :
Now from my fond embrace by tempests torn,
Our other column of the state is borne,
Nor took a kind adieu, nor sought consent*.

IV. 962.

Here, in one line, her son is figured as a column ; and in the next, he returns to be a person, to whom it belongs to take adieu, and to ask consent. This is inconsistent. The poet should either have kept himself to the idea of a man, in the literal sense ; or, if he figured him by a column, he should have ascribed nothing to him but what belonged to it. He was not at liberty to ascribe to that column the actions and properties of a man. Such unnatural mixtures render the image indistinct ; leaving it to waver, in our conception, between the figurative and the literal sense. Horace's rule, which he applies to characters, should be observed by all writers who deal in figures :

———*Servetur ad unum,*
Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.

Mr. Pope elsewhere, addressing himself to the king, says,

To thee the world its present homage pays,
The harvest early, but mature the praise.

* In the original, there is no allusion to a column, and the metaphor is regularly supported :

Ἦ τῇ μιν σοφίῃ ἐσθλὸν ἀπώλεια θυμολοῦντα
Πρωτοῖσι ἀντίσσι κλισμῶν ἢ Δαναοῖσι
Εσθλὸν, ἢ κλισίῃ καὶ Ἑλλάδα καὶ μισυῖ Ἀργεῖ·
Νῦν δ' αὖ παῖδ' ἀγαθὸν ἀνέψατο θυμῶν
Ἀχλὺς ἐκ μίγαν, ὅθ' ἔχουσιντες ἀκασα.

Δ.

This, though not so gross, is a fault, however, of the same kind. It is plain, that, had not the rhyme misled him to the choice of an improper phrase, he would have said,

The harvest early, but mature the crop :

And so would have continued the figure which he had begun. Whereas, by dropping it unfinished, and by employing the literal word, *praise*, when we were expecting something that related to the harvest, the figure is broken, and the two members of the sentence have no proper correspondence with each other :

The harvest early, but mature the praise.

The works of Ossian abound with beautiful and correct metaphors ; such as that on a hero : “ In peace, thou art the gate of war, the mountain storm.” Or this, on a woman : “ She was covered with light of beauty ; but her heart was the house of pride.” They afford, however, one instance of the fault we are now censuring : “ Trothal went forth with the stream of his people ; but they met a rock : for Fingal stood unmoved, broken they rolled back from his side. Nor did they roll in safety : the spear of the king pursued their flight.” At the beginning, the metaphor is very beautiful. The stream, the unmoved rock, the waves rolling back broken, are expressions employed in the proper and consistent language of figure ; but, in the end, when we are told, “ they did not roll in safety, because the spear of the king pursued their flight,” the literal meaning is improperly mixed with the metaphor : they are, at one and the same time, presented to us, as *waves that roll*, and *men that may be pursued and wounded with a spear*. If it be faulty to

jumble together, in this manner, metaphorical and plain language, it is still more so,

In the fifth place, to make two different metaphors meet on one object. This is what is called mixed metaphor, and is indeed one of the grossest abuses of this figure; such as Shakespeare's expression, "to take arms against a sea of troubles." This makes a most unnatural medley, and confounds the imagination entirely. Quintilian has sufficiently guarded us against it. "Id imprimis est custodiendum, ut quo genere coeperis translationis, hoc finias. Multi autem cum initium a tempestate sumerunt, incendio aut ruina finiunt; quæ est inconsequentia rerum translatarum." Observe, for instance, what an inconsistent assemblage of objects is brought together by Shakespeare in the following passage of the *Tempest*; speaking of persons recovering their judgements after the enchantment, which he himself is to dissolve;

————— The charm dissolves apace,
And as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason. —————

So many ill-sorted things are here joined, that the mind can see nothing clearly; the morning *stealing* upon the darkness, and at the same time *melting* it; the senses of men *chasing fumes*, *ignoring fumes*, and *fumes that mantle*. So again in *Romeo and Juliet*:

————— as glorious,
As is a winged messenger from heaven,
Unto the white upturn'd wondering eyes

"We must be particularly attentive to end with the same kind of metaphor with which we have begun. Some, when they begin the figure with a tempest, conclude it with a conflagration; which forms a shameful inconsistency."

Of mortals, that fall back to gaze on him,
When he bestrides the lazy pacing clouds,
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

Here, the angel is represented, as, at one moment, *bestriding* the clouds, and *sailing* upon the air; and upon the *bosom* of the air too; which forms such a confused picture, that it is impossible for any imagination to comprehend it.

More correct writers than Shakespeare sometimes fall into this error of mixing metaphors. It is surprising how the following inaccuracy should have escaped Mr. Addison in his letter from Italy:

I bridle in my struggling muse with pain,
That longs to launch into a bolder strain*.

The muse, figured as a horse, may be *bridled*; but when we speak of *launching*, we make it a ship; and, by no force of imagination, can it be supposed both a horse and a ship at one moment; *bridled*, to hinder it from *launching*. The same author, in one of his numbers in the Spectator, says, "There is not a single view of human nature, which is not sufficient to extinguish the seeds of pride." Observe the incoherence of the things here joined together, making "a view extinguish, and extinguish seeds."

Horace, also, is incorrect, in the following passage:

Urit enim fulgore suo, qui pregravat artes
Infra se politas.——

Urit qui pregravat.—He dazzles who bears down with his weight, makes plainly an inconsistent

* In my observation on this passage, I find, that I had coincided with Dr. Johnson, who passes a similar censure upon it, in his life of Addison.

mixture of metaphorical ideas. Neither can this other passage be altogether vindicated :

Ah ! quanta laboras in Charybdi,
Digne, puer, meliore flamma !

Where a whirlpool of water, Charybdis, is said to be a flame, not good enough for this young man ; meaning, that he was unfortunate in the object of his passion. Flame is, indeed, become almost a literal word for the passion of love ; but as it still retains, in some degree, its figurative power, it should never have been used as synonymous with water, and mixed with it in the same metaphor. When mr. Pope (Eloisa to Abelard) says,

All then is full, possessing and possess'd,
No craving void left aking in the breast ;

A void may, metaphorically, be said to *crave* ; but can a void be said to *ake* ?

A good rule has been given for examining the propriety of metaphors, when we doubt whether or not they be of the mixed kind ; namely, that we should try to form a picture upon them, and consider how the parts would agree, and what sort of figure the whole would present, when delineated with a pencil. By this means, we should become sensible, whether inconsistent circumstances were mixed, and a monstrous image thereby produced, as in all those faulty instances I have now been giving ; or whether the object was, all along, presented in one natural and consistent point of view.

As metaphors ought never to be mixed, so, in the sixth place, we should avoid crowding them together on the same object. Supposing each of the metaphors to be preserved distinct, yet, if they be heaped on one another, they produce a confusion

somewhat of the same kind with the mixed metaphor. We may judge of this by the following passage from Horace :

Morum ex Metello consule civicum,
 Bellique causas, et vitia, et modos,
 Ludumque fortune, gravesque
 Principum amicitias, et arma
 Nondum expiatis uncta cruoribus,
 Periculosa plenum opus alex,
 Tractas, et incedis per ignes
 Suppositos cineri doloso*.

Lib. II. 1.

This passage, though very poetical, is, however, harsh and obscure ; owing to no other cause but this, that three distinct metaphors are crowded together, to describe the difficulty of Pollio's writing a history of the civil wars. First, " Tractas arma uncta cruoribus nondum expiatis ;" next, " Opus plenum periculosa alex ;" and then, " Incedis per ignes, suppositos doloso cineri." The mind has difficulty in passing readily through so many different views given it, in quick succession, of the same object.

The only other rule concerning metaphors, which I shall add, in the seventh place, is, that they be not too far pursued. If the resemblance, on which the figure is founded, be long dwelt upon, and carried into all its minute circumstances, we make an allegory instead of a metaphor ; we tire

* Of warm commotions, wrathful jars,
 The growing seeds of civil wars ;
 Of double fortune's cruel games,
 The specious means, the private aims,
 And fatal friendships of the guilty great,
 Alas ! how fatal to the Roman state !
 Of mighty legions late subdu'd,
 And arms with Latian blood embu'd ;
 Yet unatoned (a labour vast !
 Doubtful the die, and dire the cast !)
 You treat, adventurous, and incautious tread
 On fires with faithless embers overspread.

FRANCIS.

the reader, who soon becomes weary of this play of fancy ; and we render our discourse obscure. This is called, straining a metaphor. Cowley deals in this to excess ; and to this error is owing, in a great measure, that intricacy and harshness, in his figurative language, which I before remarked. Lord Shaftsbury is sometimes guilty of pursuing his metaphors too far. Fond, to a high degree, of every decoration of style, when once he had hit upon a figure that pleased him, he was extremely loth to part with it. Thus, in his advice to an author, having taken up a soliloquy, or meditation, under the metaphor of a proper method of evacuation for an author, he pursues this metaphor through several pages, under all the forms “ of discharging crudities, “ throwing off froth and scum, bodily operation, taking physic, curing indigestion, giving vent to cholera, bile, flatulencies, and tumours ;” till, at last, the idea becomes nauseous. Dr. Young also often trespasses in the same way. The merit, however, of this writer, in figurative language, is great and deserves to be remarked. No writer, ancient or modern, had a stronger imagination than dr. Young, or one more fertile in figures of every kind. His metaphors are often new, and often natural and beautiful. But his imagination was strong and rich, rather than delicate and correct. Hence, in his Night thoughts, there prevails an obscurity and a hardness in his style. The metaphors are frequently too bold and frequently too far pursued ; the reader is dazzled rather than enlightened ; and kept constantly on the stretch to keep pace with the author. We may observe, for instance, how the following metaphor is spun out :

Thy thoughts are vagabond ; all outward bound,
Midst sands and rocks, and storms, to cruise for pleasure,
If gain'd, dear bought : and better miss'd than gain'd.
Fancy and sense, from an infected shore,

Thy cargo brings : and pestilence the prize ;
 Then such the thirst, insatiable thirst,
 By fond indulgence but inflam'd the more,
 Fancy still cruises, when poor sense is tired.

Speaking of old age, he says, it should

Walk thoughtful on the silent solemn shore
 Of that vast ocean, it must sail so soon ;
 And put good works on board : and wait the wind
 That shortly blows us into worlds unknown.

The two first lines are uncommonly beautiful ;
 “ walk thoughtful ~~on~~ the silent,” &c. but when
 he continues the metaphor, to “ putting good
 “ works on board, and waiting the wind,” it
 plainly becomes strained, and sinks in dignity. Of
 all the English authors, I know none so happy in
 his metaphors as mr. Addison. His imagination was
 neither so rich nor so strong as dr. Young's ; but
 far more chaste and delicate. Perspicuity, natural
 grace, and ease, always distinguish his figures.
 They are neither harsh nor strained ; they never
 appear to have been studied or sought after ;
 but seem to rise of their own accord from the sub-
 ject, and constantly embellish it.

I have now treated fully of the metaphor, and
 the rules that should govern it, a part of style so
 important, that it required particular illustration.
 I have only to add a few words concerning allegory.

An allegory may be regarded as a continued
 metaphor ; as it is the representation of some one
 thing by another that resembles it, and that is
 made to stand for it. Thus, in Prior's Henry and
 Emma, Emma in the following allegorical manner
 describes her constancy to Henry :

Did I but purpose to embark with thee
 On the smooth surface of a summer's sea,
 While gentle zephyrs play with prosperous gales,

And fortune's favour fills the swelling sails:
But would forsake the ship, and make the shore,
When the winds whistle and the tempests roar?

We may take also from the scriptures a very fine example of an allegory, in the 80th psalm; where the people of Israel are represented under the image of a vine, and the figure is supported throughout with great correctness and beauty:

“Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt, thou
“hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou
“preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to
“take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills
“were covered with the shadow of it; and the
“boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.
“She sent out her boughs into the sea, and her
“branches into the river. Why hast thou broken
“down her hedges, so that all they which pass
“by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the
“wood doth waste it; and the wild beast of the
“field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee,
“O God of hosts, look down from heaven, and be-
“hold, and visit this vine!” Here there is no cir-
cumstance (except perhaps one phrase at the be-
ginning, “thou hast cast out the heathen,”) that
does not strictly agree to a vine, whilst at the same
time, the whole quadrates happily with the Jew-
ish state represented by this figure. This is the first
and principal requisite in the conduct of an allego-
ry, that the figurative and the literal meaning be
not mixed inconsistently together. For instance,
instead of describing the vine, as wasted by the
boar from the wood, and devoured by the wild
beast of the field, had the psalmist said, it was af-
fected by heathens, or overcome by enemies (which
the real meaning,) this would have ruined the
allegory, and produced the same confusion, of
which I gave examples in metaphors, when the fi-
gurative and literal sense are mixed and jumbled
together. Indeed, the same rules that were

given for metaphors may also be applied to allegories, on account of the affinity they bear to each other. The only material difference between them, besides the one being short, and the other being prolonged, is, that a metaphor always explains itself by the words that are connected with it in their proper and natural meaning; as when I say, "Achilles was a lion;" an "able minister is the pillar of the state;" my lion and my pillar are sufficiently interpreted by the mention of Achilles and the minister, which I join to them; but an allegory is, or may be, allowed to stand more disconnected with the literal meaning; the interpretation not so directly pointed out, but left to our own reflexion.

Allegories were a favourite method of delivering instructions in ancient times; for what we call fables or parables are no other than allegories; where, by words and actions attributed to beasts or inanimate objects, the dispositions of men are figured; and what we call the moral, is the unfigured sense or meaning of the allegory. An ænigma or riddle is also a species of allegory; one thing represented or imaged by another; but purposely wrapt up under so many circumstances, as to be rendered obscure. Where a riddle is not intended, it is always a fault in allegory to be too dark. The meaning should be easily seen, through the figure employed to shadow it. However, the proper mixture of light and shade in such compositions, the exact adjustment of all the figurative circumstances with the literal sense, so as neither to lay the meaning too bare and open, nor to cover and wrap it up too much, has ever been found an affair of great nicety; and there are few species of composition in which it is more difficult to write, so as to please and command attention, than in allegories. In some of the visions of the Spectator, we have examples of allegories very happily executed.

LECTURE XVI.

HYPERBOLE—PERSONIFICATION— APOSTROPHE.

THE next figure, concerning which I am to treat, is called hyperbole, or exaggeration. It consists in magnifying an object beyond its natural bounds. It may be considered sometimes as a trope, and sometimes as a figure of thought: and here indeed the distinction between these two classes begins not to be clear, nor is it of any importance that we should have recourse to metaphysical subtilties, in order to keep them distinct. Whether we call it trope or figure, it is plain that it is a mode of speech which hath some foundation in nature. For in all languages, even in common conversation, hyperbolical expressions very frequently occur—as swift as the wind—as white as the snow—and the like: and our common forms of compliment are almost all of them extravagant hyperboles. If any thing be remarkably good or great in its kind, we are instantly ready to add to it some exaggerating epithet; and to make it the

greatest or best we ever saw. The imagination has always a tendency to gratify itself, by magnifying its present object, and carrying it to excess. More or less of this hyperbolical turn will prevail in language, according to the liveliness of imagination among the people who speak it. Hence young people deal always much in hyperboles. Hence the language of the Orientals was far more hyperbolical than that of the Europeans, who are of more phlegmatic, or, if you please, of more correct imagination. Hence, among all writers in early times, and in the rude periods of society, we may expect this figure to abound. Greater experience, and more cultivated society, abate the warmth of imagination, and chasten the manner of expression.

The exaggerated expressions, to which our ears are accustomed in conversation, scarcely strike us as hyperboles. In an instant we make the proper abatement, and understand them according to their just value. But when there is something striking and unusual in the form of a hyperbolical expression, it then rises into a figure of speech which draws our attention : and here it is necessary to observe, that unless the reader's imagination be in such a state as disposes it to rise and swell along with the hyperbolical expression, he is always hurt and offended by it. For a sort of disagreeable force is put upon him ; he is required to strain and exert his fancy, when he feels no inclination to make any such effort. Hence the hyperbole is a figure of difficult management ; and ought neither to be frequently used, nor long dwelt upon. On some occasions, it is undoubtedly proper ; being, as was before observed, the natural style of a sprightly and heated imagination ; but when hyperboles are unreasonable, or too frequent, they render a composition frigid and unaffecting. They are the resource of an author of feeble imagination ; of one, de-

scribing objects which either want native dignity in themselves ; or whose dignity he cannot show by describing them simply, and in their just proportions, and is therefore obliged to rest upon tumid and exaggerated expressions.

Hyperboles are of two kinds ; either such as are employed in description, or such as are suggested by the warmth of passion. The best by far, are those which are the effect of passion : for if the imagination has a tendency to magnify its objects beyond their natural proportion, passion possesses this tendency in a vastly stronger degree ; and therefore not only excuses the most daring figures, but very often renders them natural and just. All passions, without exception, love, terror, amazement, indignation, anger, and even grief, throw the mind into confusion, aggravate their objects, and of course prompt a hyperbolical style. Hence the following sentiments of Satan in Milton, as strongly as they are described, contain nothing but what is natural and proper ; exhibiting the picture of a mind agitated with rage and despair :

Me, miserable ! which way shall I flie
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair ?
Which way I flie is hell ; myself am hell ;
And in the lowest depth, a lower deep
Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven. B. iv. l. 73.

In simple description, though hyperboles are not excluded, yet they must be used with more caution, and require more preparation, in order to make the mind relish them. Either the object described must be of that kind, which of itself seizes the fancy strongly, and disposes it to run beyond bounds ; something vast, surprising, and new ; or the writer's art must be exerted in heating the fancy gradually, and preparing it to think highly of the object which he intends to exaggerate.

When a poet is describing an earthquake or a storm, or when he has brought us into the midst of a battle, we can bear strong hyperboles without displeasure. But when he is describing only a woman in grief, it is impossible not to be disgusted with such wild exaggeration as the following, in one of our dramatic poets :

——I found her on the floor
In all the storm of grief, yet beautiful ;
Pouring forth tears at such a lavish rate,
That were the world on fire, they might have drown'd
The wrath of heaven, and quench'd the mighty ruin.

LEE.

This is mere bombast. The person herself who was under the distracting agitations of grief, might be permitted to hyperbolize strongly ; but the spectator describing her, cannot be allowed an equal liberty : for this plain reason, that the one is supposed to utter the sentiments of passion, the other speaks only the language of description, which is always, according to the dictates of nature, on a lower tone : a distinction, which, however obvious, has not been attended to by many writers.

How far a hyperbole, supposing it properly introduced, may be safely carried without overstretching it—what is the proper measure and boundary of this figure—cannot, as far as I know, be ascertained by any precise rule. Good sense and just taste must determine the point, beyond which, if we pass, we become extravagant. Lucan may be pointed out as an author apt to be excessive in his hyperboles. Among the compliments paid by the Roman poets to their emperors, it had become fashionable to ask them, what part of the heavens they would choose for their habitation, after they should have become gods ? Virgil had already carried this sufficiently far in his address to Augustus :

———Tibi brachia contrahit ingens
 Scorpium, et cœli iusta plus parte relinquit*. GEOR. I.

But this did not suffice Lucan. Resolved to outdo all his predecessors, in a like address to Nero, he very gravely beseeches him not to choose his place near either of the poles, but to be sure to occupy just the middle of the heavens, lest, by going either to one side or other, his weight should overset the universe :

Sed neque in Arctoo sedem tibi legeris orbe
 Nec polus adversi calidus qua mergitur austri;
 Ætheris immensi partem si prefferis unam
 Sentiet axis onus. Librati pondera cœli
 Orbe tene medio†. PHARS. I. 53.

Such thoughts as these, are what the French call *outrés*, and always proceed from a false fire of genius. The Spanish and African writers, as Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustin, are remarked for being fond of them. As in that epitaph on Charles V. by a Spanish writer :

Pro tumulo ponas orbem, pro tegmine cœlum,
 Sidera pro facibus, pro lacrymis maria.

Sometimes they dazzle and impose by their boldness ; but wherever reason and good sense are so

- * “ The scorpion ready to receive thy laws,
 “ Yields half his region and contracts his paws.”

- † But, oh ! whatever be thy godhead great,
 Fix not in regions too remote thy seat ;
 Nor deign thou near the frozen bear to shine,
 Nor where the sultry southern stars decline.
 Rest not too much on any part the sphere,
 Hard were the task thy weight divine to bear ;
 Soon would the axis feel the unusual load,
 And, groaning, bend beneath the incumbent god ;
 O'er the mid orb, more equal shalt thou rise,
 And with a juster balance fix the skies. ROWE.

much violated, there can be no true beauty. Epigrammatic writers are frequently guilty in this respect; resting the whole merit of their epigrams on some extravagant hyperbolical turn; such as the following of dr. Pitcairn's, upon Holland's being gained from the ocean :

Tellurem fecere Dii ; sua littora Belgæ ;
 Immenseque molis opus utrumque fuit ;
 Dii vacuo sparsas glomerarunt æthere terras,
 Nil ibi quod operi possit obesse fuit.
 At Belgis, maria et cœli natura que rerum
 Obstipuit ; obstantes hi domuere Deos.

So much for the hyperbole. We proceed now to those figures which lie altogether in the thought ; where the words are taken in their common and literal sense.

Among these, the first place is unquestionably due to personification, or that figure by which we attribute life and action to inanimate objects. The technical term for this is, prosopopœia ; but as personification is of the same import, and more allied to our own language, it will be better to use this word.

It is a figure, the use of which is very extensive, and its foundation laid deep in human nature. At first view, and when considered abstractly, it would appear to be a figure of the utmost boldness, and to border on the extravagant and ridiculous. For what can seem more remote from the track of reasonable thought, than to speak of stones and trees, and fields and rivers, as if they were living creatures, and to attribute to them thought and sensation, affections and actions ? One might imagine this to be no more than childish conceit, which no person of taste could relish. In fact, however, the case is very different. No such ridiculous effect is produced by personification, when properly em-

ployed ; on the contrary, it is found to be natural and agreeable ; nor is any very uncommon degree of passion required, in order to make us relish it. All poetry, even in its most gentle and humble forms, abounds with it. From prose, it is far from being excluded ; nay, in common conversation, very frequent approaches are made to it. When we say, the ground thirsts for rain, or the earth smiles with plenty ; when we speak of ambition's being restless, or a disease being deceitful, such expressions show the facility with which the mind can accommodate the properties of living creatures to things that are inanimate, or to abstract conceptions, of its own forming.

Indeed, it is very remarkable, that there is a wonderful proneness in human nature to animate all objects. Whether this arises from a sort of assimilating principle, from a propensity to spread a resemblance of ourselves over all other things or from whatever other cause it arises, so it is, that almost every emotion which in the least agitates the mind, bestows upon its object a momentary idea of life. Let a man, by an unwary step, sprain his ankle, or hurt his foot upon a stone, and, in the ruffled, discomposed moment, he will, sometimes, feel himself disposed to break the stone in pieces, or to utter passionate expressions against it, as if it had done him an injury. If one has been long accustomed to a certain set of objects, which have made a strong impression on his imagination—as to a house, where he has passed many agreeable years—or to fields, and trees, and mountains, among which he has often walked with the greatest delight—when he is obliged to part with them, especially if he has no prospect of ever seeing them again, he can scarce avoid having somewhat of the same feeling as when he is leaving old friends. They seem endowed with life. They be-

come objects of his affection ; and, in the moment of his parting, it scarce seems absurd to him, to give vent to his feeling in words, and to take a formal adieu.

So strong is that impression of life which is made upon us, by the more magnificent and striking objects of nature especially, that I doubt not, in the least, of this having been one cause of the multiplication of divinities in the heathen world. The belief of dryads and naiads, of the genius of the wood, and the god of the river, among men of lively imaginations, in the early ages of the world, easily arose from this turn of mind. When their favourite rural objects had often been animated in their fancy, it was an easy transition to attribute to them some real divinity, some unseen power or genius which inhabited them, or in some peculiar manner belonged to them. Imagination was highly gratified, by thus gaining somewhat to rest upon with more stability ; and when belief coincided so much with imagination, very slight causes would be sufficient to establish it.

From this deduction, may be easily seen how it comes to pass, that personification makes so great a figure in all compositions, where imagination or passion has any concern. On innumerable occasions, it is the very language of imagination and passion, and, therefore, deserves to be attended to, and examined with peculiar care. There are three different degrees of this figure ; which it is necessary to remark and distinguish, in order to determine the propriety of its use. The first is, when some of the properties or qualities of living creatures are ascribed to inanimate objects, the second, when those inanimate objects are introduced as acting like such as have life ; and the third, when they are represented, either as speaking to us, or as listening to what we say to them.

The first and lowest degree of this figure, consists in ascribing to inanimate objects some of the qualities of living creatures. Where this is done, as is most commonly the case, in a word, or two, and by way of an epithet added to the object, as, "a raging storm, a deceitful disease, a cruel disaster," &c. it raises the style so little, that the humblest discourse will admit it without any force. This, indeed, is such an obscure degree of personification, that one may doubt whether it deserves the name, and might not be classed with simple metaphors, which escape in a manner unnoticed. Happily employed, however, it sometimes adds beauty and sprightliness to an expression; as in this line of Virgil;

Aut conjurato descendens Dacus ab Istro.

GEOR. II. 474.

Where the personal epithet, *conjurato*, applied to the river *Istro*, is infinitely more poetical than if it had been applied to the person, thus:

Aut conjuratus descendens Dacus ab Istro.

A very little taste will make any one feel the difference between these two lines.

The next degree of this figure is, when we introduce inanimate objects acting like those that have life. Here we rise a step higher, and the personification becomes sensible. According to the nature of the action, which we attribute to those inanimate objects, and the particularity with which we describe it, such is the strength of the figure. When pursued to any length, it belongs only to studied harangues, to highly-figured and eloquent discourse: when slightly touched, it may be admitted into subjects of less elevation. Cicero, for instance, speaking of the cases where killing another is law-

ful in self-defence, uses the following words : “ Ali-
 “ quando nobis gladius ad occidendum hominem
 “ ab ipsis porrigitur legibus.” (Orat. pro Milone.)
 The expression is happy. The laws are personified,
 as reaching forth their hand to give us a sword
 for putting one to death. Such short personifica-
 tions as these may be admitted, even into moral
 treatises, or works of cool reasoning ; and, pro-
 vided they be easy and not strained, and that we
 be not cloyed with too frequent returns of them,
 they have a good effect on style, and render it both
 strong and lively.

The genius of our language gives us an advan-
 tage in the use of this figure. As, with us, no sub-
 stantive nouns have gender, or are masculine and
 feminine, except the proper names of male and fe-
 male creatures ; by giving a gender to any
 inanimate object, or abstract idea, that is, in
 place of the pronoun *it*, using the personal
 pronouns, *he* or *she*, we presently raise the
 style, and begin personification. In solemn dis-
 course, this may often be done to good purpose,
 when speaking of religion, or virtue, or our coun-
 try, or any such object of dignity. I shall give a
 remarkably fine example from a sermon of bishop
 Sherlock’s, where we shall see natural religion
 beautifully personified, and be able to judge from
 it of the spirit and grace which this figure, when
 well conducted, bestows on a discourse. I must
 take notice, at the same time, that it is an instance
 of this figure, carried as far as prose, even in its
 highest elevation, will admit, and, therefore, suit-
 ed only to compositions where the great efforts of
 eloquence are allowed. The author is comparing
 together our Saviour and Mahomet : “ Go,” says
 he, “ to your natural religion ; lay before her
 “ Mahomet, and his disciples, arrayed in armour
 “ and blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of

“ thousands who fell by his victorious sword.
 “ Show her the cities which he set in flames, the
 “ countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and
 “ the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of
 “ the earth. When she has viewed him in this
 “ scene, carry her into his retirement ; show her
 “ the prophet’s chamber—his concubines and his
 “ wives ; and let her hear him allege revelation,
 “ and a divine commission, to justify his adultery
 “ and lust. When she is tired with this prospect,
 “ then show her the blessed Jesus, humble and
 “ meek, doing good to all the sons of men. Let
 “ her see him in his most retired privacies : let her
 “ follow him to the mount, and hear his devotions
 “ and supplications to God. Carry her to his table,
 “ to view his poor fare, and hear his heavenly
 “ discourse. Let her attend him to the tribunal,
 “ and consider the patience with which he endured
 “ the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead
 “ her to his cross ; let her view him in the agony
 “ of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecu-
 “ tors ; *Father, forgive them, for they know not*
 “ *what they do !*—When Natural Religion has view-
 “ ed both, ask her, which is the prophet of God ?
 “ But her answer we have already had, when she
 “ saw part of this scene, through the eyes of the
 “ centurion, who attended at the cross. By him
 “ she spoke, and said, *Truly this man was the son*
 “ *of God**.” This is more than elegant ; it is truly
 sublime. The whole passage is animated ; and the
 figure rises at the conclusion, when Natural Reli-
 gion, who, before, was only a spectator, is introduc-
 ed as speaking by the centurion’s voice. It has the
 better effect too, that it occurs at the conclusion of a
 discourse, where we naturally look for most warmth
 and dignity. Did bishop Sherlock’s sermons, or, in-

* Bishop Sherlock’s sermons, Vol. I. Disc. ix.

! deed, any English sermons whatever, afford us many passages equal to this, we should oftener have recourse to them for instances of the beauty of composition.

Hitherto we have spoken of prose ; in poetry, personifications of this kind are extremely frequent, and are, indeed, the life and soul of it. We expect to find every thing animated in the descriptions of a poet who has a lively fancy. Accordingly, Homer, the father and prince of poets, is remarkable for the use of this figure. War, peace, darts, spears, towns, rivers, every thing, in short, is alive in his writings. The same is the case with Milton and Shakespeare. No personification, in any author, is more striking, or introduced on a more proper occasion, than the following of Milton's, on occasion of Eve's eating the forbidden fruit :

So saying, her rash hand, in evil hour,
Forth reaching to the fruit, she pluck'd, she ate ;
Earth felt the wound ; and Nature, from her seat,
Sighing, through all her works, gave signs of woe,
That all was lost.—

ix. 780.

All the circumstances and ages of men, poverty, riches, youth, old age, all the dispositions and passions, melancholy, love, grief, contentment, are capable of being personified in poetry, with great propriety. Of this, we meet with frequent examples in Milton's *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, Parnell's hymn to contentment, Thomson's seasons, and all the good poets : nor, indeed, is it easy to set any bounds to personifications of this kind, in poetry.

One of the greatest pleasures we receive from poetry, is, to find ourselves always in the midst of our fellows ; and to see every thing thinking, feeling, and acting, as we ourselves do. This is, perhaps, the principal charm of this sort of figured

style, that it introduces us into society with all nature, and interests us even in inanimate objects, by forming a connexion between them and us, through that sensibility which it ascribes to them. This is exemplified in the following beautiful passage of Thomson's *Summer*, wherein the life which he bestows upon all nature, when describing the effects of the rising sun, renders the scenery uncommonly gay and interesting :

But yonder comes the powerful king of day
Rejoicing in the east. The lessening cloud,
The kindling azure, and the mountain's brow
Tipt with æthereal gold, his near approach
Betoken glad.——

——By thee refined,
In brisker measures, the relucient stream
Frisks o'er the mead. The precipice abrupt,
Projecting horror on the blacken'd flood,
Softens at thy return. The desert joys,
Wildly, through all his melancholy bounds.
Rude ruins glitter ; and the briny deep,
Seen from some pointed promontory's top,
Reflects from every fluctuating wave,
A glance extensive as the day.——

The same effect is remarkable in that fine passage of Milton :

——To the nuptial bower,
I led her blushing like the morn. All heaven
And happy constellations, on that hour,
Shed their selectest influence. The earth
Gave signs of gratulation, and each hill.
Joyous the birds : fresh gales, and gentle airs
Whisper'd it to the woods, and from their wings
Flung rose, flung odour from the spicy shrub,
Disporting.——

The third and highest degree of this figure remains to be mentioned, when inanimate objects are introduced, not only as feeling and acting, but as speaking to us, or hearing and listening when

we address ourselves to them. This, though on several occasions far from being unnatural, is, however, more difficult in the execution, than the other kinds of personification. For this is plainly the boldest of all rhetorical figures ; it is the style of strong passion only ; and, therefore, never to be attempted, unless when the mind is considerably heated and agitated. A slight personification of some inanimate thing, acting as if it had life, can be relished by the mind, in the midst of cool description, and when its ideas are going on in the ordinary train. But it must be in a state of violent emotion, and have departed considerably from its common track of thought, before it can so far realise the personification of an insensible object, as to conceive it listening to what we say, or making any return to us. All strong passions, however, have a tendency to use this figure ; not only love, anger, and indignation, but even those which are seemingly more dispiriting, such as, grief, remorse, and melancholy. For all passions struggle for vent, and if they can find no other object, will, rather than be silent, pour themselves forth to woods, and rocks, and the most insensible things ; especially if these be in any degree connected with the causes and objects that have thrown the mind into this agitation. Hence, in poetry, where the greatest liberty is allowed to the language of passion, it is easy to produce many beautiful examples of this figure. Milton affords us an extremely fine one, in that moving and tender address which Eve makes to paradise, just before she is compelled to leave it.

Oh ! unexpected stroke, worse than of death !
 Must I thus leave thee, Paradise ! thus leave
 Thee, native soil, these happy walks, and shades,
 Fit haunt of gods ! where I had hope to spend
 Quiet, though sad, the respite of that day,
 Which must be mortal to us both ? O flowers,

That never will in other climate grow,
 My early visitation, and my last
 Ar ev'n, which I bred up with tender hand,
 F om your first op'ning buds, and gave you names!
 Who now shall rear you to the sun, or rank
 Your tribes, and water from th' ambrosial fount?

Book XI. l. 268.

This is altogether the language of nature, and of female passion. It is observable, that all plaintive passions are peculiarly prone to the use of this figure. The complaints which Philoctetes, in Sophocles, pours out to the rocks and caves of Lemnos, amidst the excess of his grief and despair, are remarkably fine examples of it*. And there are frequent examples, not in poetry only, but in real life, of persons, when just about to suffer death, taking a passionate farewell of the sun, moon, and stars, or other sensible objects around them.

There are two great rules for the management of this sort of personification. The first rule is, never to attempt it, unless when prompted by strong passion, and never to continue it when the passion begins to flag. It is one of those high ornaments, which can only find place in the most warm and spirited parts of composition; and there, too, must be employed with moderation.

The second rule is, never to personify any object in this way, but such as has some dignity in itself, and can make a proper figure in this eleva-

* Ω λιμένες, α πρόσλητες, ω ξυτουσιαι
 Θυρη οριων, ω καταρμαζες τετρας
 Τμη ταδ'· υ γαρ αλλον οιδ'· οτω λεγω·
 Διακλαίνομαι παρσι τοις ιωβυσιν, &c.

" O mountains, rivers, rocks, and savage herds,
 " To you I speak! to you alone, I now
 " Must breathe my sorrows! you are wont to hear
 " My sad complaints, and I will tell you all
 " That I have suffered from Achilles' son!"

FRANKLIN.

tion to which we raise it. The observance of this rule is required, even in the lower degrees of personification; but still more, when an address is made to the personified object. To address the corpse of a deceased friend, is natural; but to address the clothes which he wore, introduces mean and degrading ideas. So also, addressing the several parts of one's body, as if they were animated, is not congruous to the dignity of passion. For this reason, I must condemn the following passage, in a very beautiful poem of mr. Pope's, Eloisa to Abelard :

Dear fatal name ! rest ever unreveal'd,
Nor pass these lips in holy silence seal'd.
Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
Where, mix'd with God's, his lov'd idea lies :
Oh ! write it not, my hand !—his name appears
Already written—blot it out, my tears !

Here are several different objects and parts of the body personified : and each of them is addressed or spoken to ; let us consider with what propriety. The first is, the name of Abelard : " Dear fatal " name ! rest ever," &c. To this, no reasonable objection can be made. For, as the name of a person often stands for the person himself, and suggests the same ideas, it can bear this personification with sufficient dignity. Next, Eloisa speaks to herself ; and personifies her heart for this purpose : " Hide it, my heart, within " that close, &c." As the heart is a dignified part of the human frame, and is often put for the mind, or affections, this also may pass without blame. But, when from her heart she passes to her hand, and tells her hand not to write his name, this is forced and unnatural ; a personified hand is low, and not in the style of true passion ; and the figure becomes still worse, when, in the last place,

she exhorts her tears to blot out what her hand had written, "Oh! write it not," &c. There is, in these two lines, an air of epigrammatic conceit, which native passion never suggests; and which is altogether unsuitable to the tenderness which breathes through the rest of that excellent poem.

In prose compositions, this figure requires to be used with still greater moderation and delicacy. The same liberty is not allowed to the imagination there, as in poetry. The same assistances cannot be obtained for raising passion to its proper height by the force of numbers, and the glow of style. However, addresses to inanimate objects are not excluded from prose; but have their place only in the higher species of oratory. A public speaker may on some occasions very properly address religion or virtue; or his native country, or some city or province, which has suffered, perhaps, great calamities, or been the scene of some memorable action. But we must remember, that as such addresses are among the highest efforts of eloquence, they should never be attempted, unless by persons of more than ordinary genius. For if the orator fails in his design of moving our passions by them, he is sure of being laughed at. Of all frigid things, the most frigid are the awkward and unseasonable attempts sometimes made towards such kinds of personification, especially if they be long continued. We see the writer or speaker toiling and labouring, to express the language of some passion, which he neither feels himself, nor can make us feel. We remain not only cold, but frozen; and are at full leisure to criticise on the ridiculous figure which the personified object makes, when we ought to have been transported with a glow of enthusiasm. Some of the French writers, particularly Bossuet and Flechier, in their sermons and funeral orations, have attempted and execut-

ed this figure, not without warmth and dignity. Their works are exceedingly worthy of being consulted, for instances of this, and of several other ornaments of style. Indeed the vivacity and ardour of the French genius, is more suited to this bold species of oratory, than to the more correct, but less animated genius of the British, who, in their prose works, very rarely attempt any of the high figures of eloquence*. So much for personifications or prosopœia, in all its different forms.

* In the "Oraisons Funebres de M. Bossuet," which I consider as one of the master pieces of modern eloquence, apostrophes and addresses to personified objects, frequently occur, and are supported with much spirit. Thus, for instance, in the funeral oration of Mary of Austria, queen of France, the author addresses Algiers, in the prospect of the advantage which the arms of Louis XIV. were to gain over it: "Avant lui, la France, presque sans vaisseaux, tenoit en vain aux deux mers. Maintenant, on les voit couvertes depuis le Levant jusqu'au couchant de nos flottes victorieuses; & la hardiesse Française port par tout la terreur avec le nom de Louis. Tu cederas, tu tomberas sous ce vainqueur, Alger! riche des dépouilles de la chrétienté. Tu disois en ton cœur avare, je tiens le mer sous mes loix, et les nations sont ma proie. La légèreté de tes vaisseaux te donnoit de la confiance. Mais tu te verras attaqué dans tes murailles, comme un oiseau ravissant qu'on iroit chercher parmi ses rochers, & dans son nid, où il partage son butin a ses petits. Tu rends déjà tes esclaves. Louis a brisé les fers, dont tu accablois ses sujets," &c. In another passage of the same oration, he thus apostrophizes the isle of pleasants, which had been rendered famous by being the scene of those conferences, in which the treaty of the Pyrenees between France and Spain, and the marriage of this princess with the king of France, were concluded. "Isle pacifique, où se doivent terminer les differends de deux grands empires a qui tu fers de limites: isle eternellement memorable par les conferences de deux grands ministres.—Auguste journée ou deux siers nations, long teins ennemis, et alors reconciliés par Marie Therese, s'avancent sur leur confins, leur rois a leur tete, non plus pour se combattre, mais pour s'embrasser.—Fetes sacrées, mariage fortuné, voile nuptial, benediction, sacrifice, puis-je meler aujourd'hui vos ceremonies, et vos pompes, avec ces pompes funebres, et le comble des grandeurs avec leur ruines!" In the funeral oration of Henrietta, queen of England (which is, perhaps, the noblest of all

Apostrophe is a figure so much of the same kind; that it will not require many words. It is an address to a real person, but one who is either absent or dead, as if he were present, and listening to us. It is so much allied to an address to inanimate objects personified, that both these figures are sometimes called apostrophes. However, the proper apostrophe is in boldness one degree lower than the address to personified objects; for it certainly requires a less effort of imagination to suppose persons present who are dead or absent, than to animate insensible beings, and direct our discourse to them. Both figures are subject to the same rule of being prompted by passion, in order to render them natural; for both are the language of passion or strong emotions only. Among the poets, apostrophe is frequent; as in Virgil:

—————Pereunt Hypanisque Damasque
Confixi a sociis; nec te, tua plurima, Panthen,
Labentem pietas, nec Apollinis insula texit*!

The poems of Ossian are full of the most beautiful instances of this figure: “Weep on the rocks
“ of roaring winds, O maid of Inistore; bend thy
“ fair head over the waves, thou fairer than the
“ ghost of the hills, when it moves in a sunbeam,
“ at noon over the silence of Morven! he is
“ fallen! thy youth is low; pale beneath the

his compositions), after recounting all she had done to support her unfortunate husband, he concludes with this beautiful apostrophe: “O mere! O femme! O reine admirable, et digne d’une meilleure fortune, si les fortunes de la terre étoient quelque chose! Enfin il faut céder à votre sort. Vous avez assez soutenu l’état, qui est attaqué par une force invincible et divine. Il ne reste plus désormais, si non que vous teniez ferme parmi ses ruines.”

- * Nor Pantheus! thee, thy mitre, nor the bands
Of awful Phœbus sav’d from impious hands.

DRYDEN.

“ sword of Cuchullin† !” Quintilian affords us a very fine example in prose ; when, in the beginning of his sixth book, deploring the untimely death of his son, which had happened during the course of the work, he makes a very moving and tender apostrophe to him. “ Nam quo ille animo, “ qua medicorum admiratione, mensium octo va- “ letudinem tulit ! ut me in supremis consolatus “ est ! quam etiam jam deficiens, jamque non “ noster, ipsum illum alienatæ mentis errorem “ circa solas literas habuit ! Tuosne ergo—O mea “ spes inanes !—labentes oculos, tuum fugientem “ spiritum vidi ? tuum corpus frigidum, exangue, “ complexus ; animam recipere, auramque com- “ munem haurire amplius potui ? Tene, consulari “ nuper adoptione ad omnium spes honorum pa- “ tris admotum—te, avunculo prætori generum “ destinatum—te, omnium spe Atticæ eloquentiæ “ candidatum, parens superstes tantum ad pœnas “ amisi* !” In this passage, Quintilian shows the “ true genius of an orator, as much as he does “ elsewhere that of the critic.

For such bold figures of discourse, as strong

† Fingal, B. I.

* “ With what spirit, and how much to the admiration of the physicians did he bear, throughout eight months, his lingering distress ? With what tender attention did he study, even in the last extremity, to comfort me ? And, when no longer himself, how affecting was it to behold the disordered efforts of his wandering mind, wholly employed on subjects of literature ? Ah ! my frustrated and fallen hopes ! have I then beheld your closing eyes, and heard the last groan issue from your lips ? After having embraced your cold and breathless body, how was it in my power to draw the vital air, or continue to drag a miserable life ? When I had just beheld you raised by consular adoption to the prospect of all your father’s honours—destined to be son-in-law to your uncle the prætor—pointed out by general expectation as the successful candidate for the prize of Attic eloquence, in this moment of your opening honours, must I lose you forever, and remain an unhappy parent, surviving only to suffer woe !”

personifications, addresses to personified objects, and apostrophes, the glowing imagination of the ancient Oriental nations was particularly fitted. Hence, in the sacred scriptures, we find some very remarkable instances : “ O thou sword of the
“ Lord ! how long will it be ere thou be quiet ?
“ put thyself up into thy scabbard ; rest, and be
“ still ! How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath
“ given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against
“ the sea-shore ! there hath he appointed it*.”

There is one passage, in particular, which I must not omit to mention, because it contains a greater assemblage of sublime ideas, of bold and daring figures, than is perhaps any where to be met with. It is in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, where the prophet thus describes the fall of the Assyrian empire : “ thou shalt take up this proverb against the
“ king of Babylon, and say, how hast the oppressor
“ ceased ! the golden city ceased ! the Lord hath
“ broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre
“ of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath
“ with a continual stroke—he that ruled the na-
“ tions in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth.
“ The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet : they
“ break forth into singing. Yea the fir-trees re-
“ joice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, say-
“ ing, since thou art laid down, no feller is come
“ up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for
“ thee, to meet thee at thy coming : it stirreth
“ up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of
“ the earth : it hath raised up from their thrones
“ all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak,
“ and say unto thee, art thou also become weak
“ as we ? art thou become like unto us ? thy
“ pomp is brought down to the grave, and the
“ noise of thy viols : the worm is spread under

* Jer. xlvii. 6, 7.

“ thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou
“ fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the
“ morning ! how art thou cut down to the ground,
“ which didst weaken the nations ! for thou hast
“ said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven ; I
“ will exalt my throne above the stars of God ; I
“ will sit also upon the mount of the congrega-
“ tion, in the sides of the north. I will ascend
“ above the heights of the clouds ; I will be like
“ the most high. Yet thou shalt be brought down.
“ to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see
“ thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider
“ thee, saying, is this the man that made the earth
“ to tremble, that did shake kingdoms ? that made
“ the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the
“ cities thereof ? that opened not the house of his
“ prisoners ? all the kings of the nations, even all
“ of them lie in glory, every one in his own house.
“ But thou art cast out of thy grave, like an abo-
“ minable branch : and as the raiment of those
“ that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that
“ go down to the stones of the pit, as a carcase
“ trodden under feet.” This whole passage is full
of sublimity. Every object is animated ; a variety
of personages are introduced : we hear the Jews,
the fir-trees, and cedars of Lebanon, the ghosts
of departed kings, the king of Babylon himself,
and those who look upon his body, all speaking in
their order, and acting their different parts without
confusion.

LECTURE XVII.

COMPARISON, ANTITHESIS, INTER- ROGATION, EXCLAMATION, AND OTHER FIGURES OF SPEECH.

WE are still engaged in the consideration of figures of speech ; which, as they add much to the beauty of style when properly employed, and are at the same time liable to be greatly abused, require a careful discussion. As it would be tedious to dwell on all the variety of figurative expressions which rhetoricians have enumerated, I chose to select the capital figures, such as occur most frequently, and to make my remarks on these ; the principles and rules laid down concerning them, will sufficiently direct us to the use of the rest, either in prose or poetry. Of metaphor, which is the most common of them all, I treated fully ; and in the last lecture I discoursed of hyperbole, personification, and apostrophe. This lecture will nearly finish what remains on the head of figures.

Comparison, or simile, is what I am to treat of first : a figure frequently employed both by poets

and prose-writers, for the ornament of composition. In a former lecture, I explained fully the difference betwixt this and metaphor. A metaphor is a comparison implied, but not expressed as such; as when I say, "Achilles is a lion," meaning, that he resembles one in courage or strength. A comparison is, when the resemblance between two objects is expressed in form, and generally pursued more fully than the nature of a metaphor admits; as when I say, "The actions of princes are like those great rivers, the course of which every one beholds, but their springs have been seen by few." This slight instance will show, that a happy comparison is a kind of sparkling ornament, which adds not a little lustre and beauty to discourse; and hence such figures are termed by Cicero, "Orationis lumina."

The pleasure we take in comparisons is just and natural. We may remark three different sources whence it arises. First, from the pleasure which nature has annexed to that act of the mind by which we compare any two objects together, trace resemblances among those that are different, and differences among those that resemble each other; a pleasure, the final cause of which is, to prompt us to remark and observe, and thereby to make us advance in useful knowledge. This operation of the mind is naturally and universally agreeable; as appears from the delight which even children have in comparing things together, as soon as they are capable of attending to the objects that surround them. Secondly, the pleasure of comparison arises from the illustration which the simile employed gives to the principal object; from the clearer view of it which it presents; or the more strong impression of it which it stamps upon the mind: and, thirdly, it arises from the introduction of a new and commonly a splendid object,

associated to the principal one of which we treat ; and from the agreeable picture which that object presents to the fancy ; new scenes being thereby brought into view, which, without the assistance of this figure, we could not have enjoyed.

All comparisons whatever may be reduced under two heads, *explaining* and *embellishing* comparisons. For when a writer likens the object of which he treats, to any other thing, it always is, or at least always should be, with a view either to make us understand that object more distinctly, or to dress it up, and adorn it. All manner of subjects admit of explaining comparisons. Let an author be reasoning ever so strictly, or treating the most abstruse point in philosophy, he may very properly introduce a comparison, merely with a view to make his subject better understood. Of this nature, is the following in Mr. Harris's *Hermes*, employed to explain a very abstract point, the distinction between the powers of sense and imagination in the human mind. "As wax," says he, "would not be adequate to the purpose of signature, if it had not the power to retain as well as to receive the impression ; the same holds of the soul, with respect to sense and imagination. Sense is its receptive power ; imagination its retentive. Had it sense without imagination, it would not be as wax, but as water, where, though all impressions be instantly made, yet as soon as they are made, they are instantly lost." In comparisons of this nature, the understanding is concerned much more than the fancy : and therefore the only rules to be observed, with respect to them, are, that they be clear, and that they be useful ; that they tend to render our conception of the principal object more distinct ; and that they do not lead our view aside, and bewilder it with any false light.

But embellishing comparisons, introduced not so

much with a view to inform and instruct, as to adorn the subject of which we treat, are those with which we are chiefly concerned at present, as figures of speech ; and those, indeed, which most frequently occur. Resemblance, as I before mentioned, is the foundation of this figure. We must not, however, take resemblance, in too strict a sense, for actual similitude or likeness of appearance. Two objects may sometimes be very happily compared to one another, though they resemble each other, strictly speaking, in nothing ; only, because they agree in the effects which they produce upon the mind ; because they raise a train of similar, or what may be called, concordant ideas ; so that the remembrance of the one, when recalled, serves to strengthen the impression made by the other. For example, to describe the nature of soft and melancholy music, Ossian says, “ The music “ of Carryl was, like the memory of joys that are “ past, pleasant and mournful to the soul.” This is happy and delicate. Yet, surely, no kind of music has any resemblance to a feeling of the mind, such as the memory of past joys. Had it been compared to the voice of the nightingale, or the murmur of the stream, as it would have been by some ordinary poet, the likeness would have been more strict ; but, by founding his simile upon the effect which Carryl’s music produced, the poet, while he conveys a very tender image, gives us, at the same time, a much stronger impression of the nature and strain of that music. “ Like the memory of “ joys that are past, pleasant and mournful to the “ soul.”

In general, whether comparisons be founded on the similitude of the two objects compared, or on some analogy and agreement in their effects, the fundamental requisite of a comparison is, that it shall serve to illustrate the object, for the sake of

which it is introduced, and to give us a stronger conception of it. Some little excursions of fancy may be permitted in pursuing the simile ; but they must never deviate far from the principal object. If it be a great and noble one, every circumstance in the comparison must tend to aggrandise it ; if it be a beautiful one, to render it more amiable ; if terrible, to fill us with more awe. But to be a little more particular : the rules to be given concerning comparisons, respect chiefly two articles ; the propriety of their introduction, and the nature of the objects whence they are taken.

First, the propriety of their introduction. From what has been already said of comparisons, it appears, that they are not, like the figures of which I treated in the last lecture, the language of strong passion. No ; they are the language of imagination rather than of passion—of an imagination sprightly, indeed, and warmed—but undisturbed by any violent or agitating emotion. Strong passion is too severe to admit this play of fancy. It has no leisure to cast about for resembling objects ; it dwells on that object which has seized and taken possession of the soul. It is too much occupied and filled by it, to turn its view aside, or to fix its attention on any other thing. An author, therefore, can scarcely commit a greater fault, than, in the midst of passion, to introduce a simile. Metaphorical expression may be allowable in such a situation ; though even this may be carried too far : but the pomp and solemnity of a formal comparison is altogether a stranger to passion. It changes the key in a moment ; relaxes and brings down the mind ; and shows us a writer perfectly at his ease, while he is personating some other, who is supposed to be under the torment of agitation. Our writers of tragedies are very apt to err here. In some of Mr. Rowe's plays, these flowers of similes have been

strewn unseasonably. Mr. Addison's Cato, too, is justly censurable in this respect ; as, when Portius, just after Lucia had bid him farewell forever, and when he should naturally have been represented as in the most violent anguish, makes his reply in a studied and affected comparison :

Thus o'er the dying lamp th' unsteady flame
Hangs quiv'ring on a point, leaps off by fits,
And falls again, as loth to quit its hold.
Thou must not go ; my soul still hovers o'er thee,
And can't get loose.

Every one must be sensible, that this is quite remote from the language of nature on such occasions.

However, as comparison is not the style of strong passion, so neither, when employed for embellishment, is it the language of a mind wholly unmoved. It is a figure of dignity, and always requires some elevation in the subject, in order to make it proper : for it supposes the imagination to be uncommonly enlivened, though the heart be not agitated by passion. In a word, the proper place of comparisons lies in the middle region between the highly pathetic, and the very humble style. This is a wide field, and gives ample range to the figure. But even this field we must take care not to overstock with it. For, as was before said, it is a sparkling ornament ; and all things that sparkle, dazzle and fatigue, if they recur too often. Similes should, even in poetry, be used with moderation ; but, in prose writings, much more : otherwise, the style will become disagreeably florid, and the ornament lose its virtue and effect.

I proceed, next, to the rules that relate to objects, whence comparisons should be drawn ; supposing them introduced in their proper place.

In the first place, they must not be drawn from

things, which have too near and obvious a resemblance to the object with which we compare them. The great pleasure of the act of comparing lies, in discovering likenesses among things of different species, where we would not, at the first glance, expect a resemblance. There is little art or ingenuity in pointing out the resemblance of two objects, that are so much akin, or lie so near to one another in nature, that every one sees they must be like. When Milton compares satan's appearance, after his fall, to that of the sun suffering an eclipse, and affrighting the nations with portentous darkness, we are struck with the happiness and the dignity of the similitude. But, when he compares Eve's bower in paradise, to the arbour of Pomona, or Eve herself, to a dryad, or wood-nymph, we receive little entertainment: as every one sees, that one arbour must, of course, in several respects, resemble another arbour, and one beautiful woman another beautiful woman.

Among similes, faulty through too great obviousness of the likeness, we must likewise rank those which are taken from objects become trite and familiar in poetical language. Such are the similes of a hero to a lion, of a person in sorrow to a flower drooping its head, of violent passion to a tempest, of chastity to snow, of virtue to the sun or the stars, and many more of this kind, with which we are sure to find modern writers, of second rate genius, abounding plentifully; handed down from every writer of verses to another, as by hereditary right. These comparisons were, at first, perhaps, very proper for the purposes to which they are applied. In the ancient original poets, who took them directly from nature, not from their predecessors, they had beauty. But they are now beaten; our ears are so accustomed to them, that they give no amusement to the fancy. There

is, indeed, no mark by which we can more readily distinguish a poet of true genius, from one of a barren imagination, than by the strain of their comparisons. All who call themselves poets, affect them: but, whereas a mere versifier copies no new image from nature, which appears, to his uninventive genius, exhausted by those who have gone before him, and, therefore, contents himself with humbly following their track; to an author of real fancy, nature seems to unlock, spontaneously, her hidden stores; and the eye, "quick glancing from earth to heaven," discovers new shapes and forms, new likenesses between objects unobserved before, which render his similes original, expressive, and lively.

But, in the second place, as comparisons ought not to be founded on likenesses too obvious, still less ought they to be founded on those which are too faint and remote. For these, in place of assisting, strain the fancy to comprehend them, and throw no light upon the subject. It is also to be observed, that a comparison, which, in the principal circumstances, carries a sufficiently near resemblance, may become unnatural and obscure, if pushed too far. Nothing is more opposite to the design of this figure, than to hunt after a great number of coincidences in minute points, merely to show how far the poet's wit can stretch the resemblance. This is mr. Cowley's common fault; whose comparisons generally run out so far, as to become rather a studied exercise of wit, than an illustration of the principal object. We need only open his works, his odes especially, to find instances every where.

In the third place, the object from which a comparison is drawn, should never be an unknown object, or one, of which few people can form clear ideas: "Ad inferendam rebus lucem," says

Quintilian, "repertæ sunt similitudines. Præcipue, igitur, est custodiendum, ne id quod similitudinis gratia alcivimus, aut obscurum sit, aut ignotum. Debet enim id quod illustrandæ alterius rei gratia assumitur, ipsum esse clarius eo quod illuminatur.*" Comparisons, therefore, founded on philosophical discoveries, or on anything with which persons of a certain trade only, or a certain profession, are conversant, attain not their proper effect. They should be taken from those illustrious, noted objects, which most of the readers either have seen, or can strongly conceive. This leads me to remark a fault of which modern poets are very apt to be guilty. The ancients took their similes from that face of nature, and that class of objects, with which they and their readers were acquainted. Hence lions, and wolves, and serpents, were fruitful, and very proper sources of similes amongst them; and these having become a sort of consecrated, classical images, are very commonly adopted by the moderns—injudiciously, however; for the propriety of them is now in a great measure lost. It is only at second hand, and by description, that we are acquainted with many of those objects; and, to most readers of poetry, it were more to the purpose to describe lions, or serpents, by similes taken from men, than to describe men by lions. Now-a-days, we can more easily form the conception of a fierce combat between two men, than between a bull and a tiger. Every country has a scenery peculiar to itself; and the imagery of eve-

* "Comparisons have been introduced into discourse, for the sake of throwing light on the subject. We must, therefore, be much on our guard, not to employ, as the ground of our simile, any object which is either obscure or unknown. That, surely, which is used for the purpose of illustrating some other thing, ought to be more obvious and plain, than the thing intended to be illustrated."

ry good poet will exhibit it. The introduction of unknown objects, or of a foreign scenery, betrays a poet copying, not after nature, but from other writers. I have only to observe further,

In the fourth place, that, in compositions of a serious or elevated kind, similes should never be taken from low or mean objects. These are degrading; whereas, similes are commonly intended to embellish, and to dignify: and, therefore, unless in burlesque writings, or where similes are introduced purposely to vilify and diminish an object, mean ideas should never be presented to us. Some of Homer's comparisons have been taxed, without reason, on this account. For it is to be remembered, that the meanness or dignity of objects depends, in a great degree, on the ideas and manners of the age wherein we live. Many similes, therefore, drawn from the incidents of rural life, which appear low to us, had abundance of dignity in those simpler ages of antiquity.

I have now considered such of the figures of speech as seemed most to merit a full and particular discussion—metaphor, hyberbole, personification, apostrophe, and comparison. A few more yet remain to be mentioned; the proper use and conduct of which will be easily understood from the principles already laid down.

As comparison is founded on the resemblance, so antithesis on the contrast or opposition of two objects. Contrast has always this effect, to make each of the contrasted objects appear in the stronger light. White, for instance, never appears so bright as when it is opposed to black, and when both are viewed together. Antithesis, therefore, may, on many occasions, be employed to advantage, in order to strengthen the impression which we intend that any object should make. Thus Cicero, in his oration for Milo, representing the im-

probability of Milo's forming a design to take away the life of Clodius, at a time when all circumstances were unfavourable to such a design, and after he had let other opportunities slip, when he could have executed the same design, if he had formed it, with much more ease and safety, heightens our conviction of this improbability by a skilful use of this figure: "Quem igitur cum omnium gratia interficere noluit, hunc voluit cum aliquorum querela? Quem jure, quem loco, quem tempore, quem impune, non est ausus, hunc injuria, iniquo loco, alieno tempore, periculo capitis, non dubitavit occidere*?" In order to render an antithesis more complete, it is always of advantage, that the words and members of the sentence, expressing the contrasted objects, be, as in this instance of Cicero's, similarly constructed, and made to correspond to each other. This leads us to remark the contrast more, by setting the things which we oppose more clearly over against each other; in the same manner as when we contrast a black and a white object, in order to perceive the full difference of their colour, we would choose to have both objects of the same bulk, and placed in the same light. Their resemblance to each other, in certain circumstances, makes their disagreement in others more palpable.

At the same time, I must observe, that the frequent use of antithesis, especially where the opposition in the words is nice and quaint, is apt to render style disagreeable. Such a sentence as the fol-

* "Is it credible, that, when he declined putting Clodius to death with the consent of all, he would choose to do it with the disapprobation of many? Can you believe that the person whom he scrupled to slay, when he might have done so with full justice, in a convenient place, at a proper time, with secure impunity, he made no scruple to murder against justice, in an unfavourable place, at an unseasonable time, and at the risque of capital condemnation?"

lowing, from Seneca, does very well, where it stands alone : “ Si quem volueris esse divitem, non est quod augeas divitias, sed minuas cupiditates*.” Or this : “ Si ad naturam vives, nunquam eris pauper ; si ad opinionem, nunquam dives†.” A maxim, or moral saying, properly enough receives this form ; both because it is supposed to be the fruit of meditation, and because it is designed to be engraven on the memory, which recalls it more easily by the help of such contrasted expressions. But where a string of such sentences succeed each other—where this becomes an author’s favourite and prevailing manner of expressing himself—his style is faulty ; and it is upon this account Seneca has been often, and justly, censured. Such a style appears too studied and laboured ; it gives us the impression of an author attending more to his manner of saying things, than to the things themselves which he says. Dr. Young, though a writer of real genius, was too fond of antithesis. In his estimate of human life, we find whole pages that run in such a strain as this : “ The peasant complains aloud ; the courtier in secret repines. In want, what distress ! in affluence, what satiety ! The great are under as much difficulty to expend with pleasure, as the mean to labour with success. The ignorant, through ill-grounded hope, are disappointed ; the knowing, through knowledge, despond. Ignorance occasions mistake ; mistake, disappointment ; and disappointment is misery. Knowledge, on the other hand, gives true judgment ; and true judgment of human things,

* “ If you seek to make one rich, study not to increase his stores, but to diminish his desires.”

† “ If you regulate your desires according to the standard of nature, you will never be poor ; if according to the standard of opinion, you will never be rich.”

“ gives a demonstration of their insufficiency to
 “ our peace.” There is too much glitter in such
 a style as this, to please long. We are fatigued,
 by attending to such quaint and artificial sentences
 often repeated.

There is another sort of antithesis, the beauty
 of which consists in surprising us by the unexpected
 contrasts of things which it brings together.
 Much wit may be shown in this ; but it belongs
 wholly to pieces of professed wit and humour,
 and can find no place in grave compositions. Mr.
 Pope, who is remarkably fond of antithesis, is
 often happy in this use of the figure. So, in his
 rape of the lock :

Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
 Or some frail china jar receive a flaw ;
 Or stain her honour, or her new brocade ;
 Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade,
 Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball,
 Or whether heav'n has doom'd that Shock must fall.

What is called the point of an epigram, consists, for
 most part, in some antithesis of this kind ; sur-
 prising us with the smart and unexpected turn,
 which it gives to the thought : and in the fewer
 words it is brought out, it is always the happier.

Comparisons and antithesis are figures of a cool
 nature ; the productions of imagination, not of pas-
 sion. Interrogations and exclamations, of which I
 am next to speak, are passionate figures. They are,
 indeed, on so many occasions, the native language
 of passion, that their use is extremely frequent ;
 and, in ordinary conversation, when men are heat-
 ed, they prevail as much as in the most sublime
 oratory. The unfigured, literal use of interroga-
 tion, is to ask a question ; but when men are
 prompted by passion, whatever they would affirm, or
 deny with great vehemence, they naturally put in

the form of a question ; expressing thereby the strongest confidence of the truth of their own sentiment, and appealing to their hearers for the impossibility of the contrary. Thus, in scripture :
 “ God is not a man, that he should lie, neither
 “ the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he
 “ said it ? and shall he not do it ? Hath he spo-
 “ ken it ? and shall he not make it good ?”
 So Demosthenes, addressing himself to the Athenians : “ Tell me, will you still go about, and ask
 “ one another, what news ? What can be more
 “ astonishing news than this, that the man of Ma-
 “ cedon makes war upon the Athenians, and dis-
 “ poses of the affairs of Greece ? — Is Philip dead ?
 “ No, but he is sick. What signifies it to you whe-
 “ ther he be dead or alive ? For, if any thing
 “ happens to this Philip, you will immediately
 “ raise up another.” All this, delivered without
 interrogation, had been faint and ineffectual ; but
 the warmth and eagerness which this questioning
 method expresses, awakens the hearers, and strikes
 them with much greater force.

Interrogations may often be employed with propriety, in the course of no higher emotions than naturally arise in pursuing some close and earnest reasoning. But exclamations belong only to stronger emotions of the mind ; to surprise, admiration, anger, joy, grief, and the like :

*Heu pietas ! heu prisca fides ! invictaque bello
 Dextra !*

Both interrogation and exclamation, and, indeed, all passionate figures of speech, operate upon us by means of sympathy. Sympathy is a very powerful and extensive principle in our nature, disposing us to enter into every feeling and passion, which

we behold expressed by others. Hence, a single person coming into company with strong marks, either of melancholy or joy upon his countenance, will diffuse that passion, in a moment, through the whole circle. Hence, in a great croud, passions are so easily caught, and so fast spread, by that powerful contagion which the animated looks, cries, and gestures of a multitude never fail to carry. Now, interrogations and exclamations, being natural signs of a moved and agitated mind, always, when they are properly used, dispose us to sympathize with the dispositions of those who use them, and to feel as they feel.

From this it follows, that the great rule, with regard to the conduct of such figures, is, that the writer attend to the manner in which nature dictates to us to express any emotion or passion, and that he give his language that turn, and no other; above all, that he never affect the style of a passion which he does not feel. With interrogations he may use a good deal of freedom; these, as above observed, falling in so much with the ordinary course of language and reasoning, even when no great vehemence is supposed to have place in the mind. But, with respect to exclamations, he must be more reserved. Nothing has a worse effect than the frequent and unreasonable use of them. Raw, juvenile writers imagine, that, by pouring them forth often, they render their compositions warm and animated. Whereas quite the contrary follows. They render it frigid to excess. When an author is always calling upon us to enter into transports which he has said nothing to inspire, we are both disgusted and enraged at him. He raises no sympathy; for he gives us no passion of his own, in which we can take part. He gives us words, and not passion; and, of course, can raise no passion, unless that of indignation. Hence, I am inclined to

think, he was not much mistaken, who said, that when, on looking into a book, he found the pages thick bespangled with the point which is called, "Punctum admirationis," he judged this to be a sufficient reason for his laying it aside. And, indeed, were it not for the help of this "punctum admirationis," with which many writers of the rapturous kind so much abound, one would be often at a loss to discover, whether or not it was exclamation which they aimed at. For, it has now become a fashion, among these writers, to subjoin points of admiration to sentences, which contain nothing but simple affirmations, or propositions ; as if, by an affected method of pointing, they could transform them in the reader's mind into high figures of eloquence. Much akin to this, is another contrivance practised by some writers, of separating almost all the members of their sentences from each other, by blank lines ; as if, by setting them thus asunder, they bestowed some special importance upon them ; and required us, in going along, to make a pause at every other word, and weigh it well. This, I think, may be called a typographical figure of speech. Neither, indeed, since we have been led to mention the arts of writers for-increasing the importance of their words, does another custom, which prevailed very much some time ago, seem worthy of imitation ; I mean that of distinguishing the significant words, in every sentence, by *Italic* characters. On some occasions, it is very proper to use such distinctions. But when we carry them so far, as to mark with them every supposed emphatical word, these words are apt to multiply so fast in the author's imagination, that every page is crowded with *Italics* ; which can produce no effect whatever, but to hurt the eye, and create confusion. Indeed, if the sense point not out the most emphatical expressions, a variation in the

type, especially when occurring so frequently, will give small aid. And, accordingly, the most masterly writers, of late, have, with good reason, laid aside all those feeble props of significancy, and trusted wholly to the weight of their sentiments for commanding attention. But to return from this digression :

Another figure of speech, proper only to animated and warm composition, is what some critical writers call *vision* ; when, in place of relating something that is past, we use the present tense, and describe it as actually passing before our eyes. Thus Cicero, in his fourth oration against Catiline : “ Videor enim mihi hanc urbem videre, “ lucem orbis terrarum atque arcem omnium gentium, subito uno incendio concidentem ; cerno “ animo sepulta in patria miseros atque insepultos “ acervos civium ; versatur mihi ante oculos aspectus Cethegi, et furor, in vestra cæde bacchantis*.” This manner of description supposes a sort of enthusiasm, which carries the person who describes in some measure out of himself ; and, when well executed, must needs impress the reader or hearer strongly, by the force of that sympathy which I have before explained. But, in order to a successful execution, it requires an uncommonly warm imagination, and such a happy selection of circumstances, as shall make us think we see before our eyes the scene that is described. Otherwise, it shares the same fate with all feeble attempts towards passionate figures ; that of throwing ridicule upon the author, and leaving the reader

* “ I seem to myself to behold this city, the ornament of the earth, and the capital of all nations, suddenly involved in one conflagration. I see before me the slaughtered heaps of citizens lying unburied in the midst of their ruined country. The furious countenance of Cethegus rises to my view, while with a savage joy he is triumphing in your miseries.”

more cool and uninterested than he was before. The same observations are to be applied to repetition, suspension, correction, and many more of those figurative forms of speech, which rhetoricians have enumerated among the beauties of eloquence. They are beautiful, or not, exactly in proportion as they are native expressions of the sentiment or passion intended to be heightened by them. Let nature and passion always speak their own language, and they will suggest figures in abundance. But, when we seek to counterfeit a warmth which we do not feel, no figures will either supply the defect, or conceal the imposture.

There is one figure (and I shall mention no more) of frequent use among all public speakers, particularly at the bar, which Quintilian insists upon considerably, and calls amplification. It consists in an artful exaggeration of all the circumstances of some object or action which we want to place in a strong light, either a good or a bad one. It is not so properly one figure, as the skilful management of several, which we make to tend to one point. It may be carried on by a proper use of magnifying or extenuating terms—by a regular enumeration of particulars—or by throwing together, as into one mass, a crowd of circumstances—by suggesting comparisons also with things of a like nature. But the principal instrument by which it works, is by a climax, or a gradual rise of one circumstance above another, till our idea be raised to the utmost. I spoke formerly of a climax in sound; a climax in sense, when well carried on, is a figure which never fails to amplify strongly. The common example of this is, that noted passage in Cicero, which every school-boy knows: “*Facinus est vincire civem Romanum; scelus, verberare; prope parricidium, necare; quid dicam in crucem tollere?*” I shall give an instance

• “It is a crime to put a Roman citizen in bonds: it is

from a printed pleading of a famous Scotch lawyer, Sir George M'Kenzie. It is in a charge to the jury, in the case of a woman accused of murdering her own child. "Gentlemen, if one man had any how slain another, if an adversary had killed his opposer, or a woman occasioned the death of her enemy, even these criminals would have been capitally punished by the Cornelian law : but, if this guiltless infant, who could make no enemy, had been murdered by its own nurse, what punishments would not then the mother have demanded ? With what cries and exclamations would she have stunned your ears ? What shall we say then, when a woman, guilty of homicide, a mother, of the murder of her innocent child, hath comprised all those misdeeds in one single crime ; a crime in its own nature, detestable ; in a woman, prodigious ; in a mother, incredible ; and perpetrated against one whose age called for compassion, whose near relation claimed affection, and whose innocence deserved the highest favour ?" I must take notice, however, that such regular climaxes as these, though they have considerable beauty, have, at the same time, no small appearance of art and study ; and, therefore, though they may be admitted into formal harangues, yet they speak not the language of great earnestness and passion, which seldom proceed by steps so regular. Nor, indeed, for the purposes of effectual persuasion, are they likely to be so successful, as an arrangement of circumstances in a less artificial order. For, when much art appears, we are always put on our guard against the deceits of eloquence ; but when a speaker has reasoned strongly, and, by

the height of guilt to scourge him ; little less than parricide to put him to death : what name then shall I give to crucifying him ?"

force of argument, has made good his main point, he may then, taking advantage of the favourable bent of our minds, make use of such artificial figures to confirm our belief, and to warm our minds.

LECTURE XVIII.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE—GENERAL
CHARACTERS OF STYLE—DIFFUSE,
CONCISE—FEEBLE, NERVOUS—
DRY, PLAIN, NEAT, ELEGANT,
FLOWERY.

HAVING treated, at considerable length, of the figures of speech, of their origin, of their nature, and of the management of such of them as are important enough to require a particular discussion, before finally dismissing this subject, I think it incumbent on me, to make some observations concerning the proper use of figurative language in general. These, indeed, I have, in part, already anticipated. But, as great errors are often committed in this part of style, especially by young writers, it may be of use that I bring together, under one view, the most material directions on this head.

I begin with repeating an observation, formerly made, that neither all the beauties, nor even the chief beauties of composition, depend upon tropes and figures. Some of the most sublime and most pathetic passages of the most admired authors, both in prose and poetry, are expressed in the most

simple style, without any figure at all ; instances of which I have before given. On the other hand, a composition may abound with these studied ornaments—the language may be artful, splendid, and highly figured—and yet the composition be on the whole frigid and unaffecting. Not to speak of sentiment and thought, which constitute the real and lasting merit of any work, if the style be stiff and affected, if it be deficient in perspicuity or precision, or in ease and neatness, all the figures that can be employed, will never render it agreeable : they may dazzle a vulgar, but will never please a judicious eye.

In the second place, figures, in order to be beautiful, must always rise naturally from the subject. I have shown, that all of them are the language either of imagination, or of passion ; some of them suggested by imagination, when it is awakened and sprightly, such as metaphors and comparisons ; others by passion or more heated emotion, such as personifications and apostrophies. Of course, they are beautiful then only, when they are prompted by fancy, or by passion. They must rise of their own accord ; they must flow from a mind warmed by the object which it seeks to describe ; we should never interrupt the course of thought, to cast about for figures. If they be sought after coolly, and fastened on as designed ornaments, they will have a miserable effect. It is a very erroneous idea, which many have of the ornaments of style, as if they were things detached from the subject, and that could be stuck to it, like lace upon a coat : this is indeed,

*Purpureus late qui splendeat unus aut alter
Assuitur paucis.**—

ARS POET.

* “ Shreds of purple with broad lustre shine,
“ Sew’d on your poem.”

FRANCIS.

And it is this false idea which has often brought attention to the beauties of writing into disrepute. Whereas, the real and proper ornaments of style arise from sentiment. They flow in the same stream with the current of thought. A writer of genius conceives his subject strongly; his imagination is filled and impressed with it; and pours itself forth in that figurative language which imagination naturally speaks. He puts on no emotion which his subject does not raise in him; he speaks as he feels; but his style will be beautiful, because his feelings are lively. On occasions, when fancy is languid, or finds nothing to rouse it, we should never attempt to hunt for figures. We then work, as it is said, "*invita Minerva*;" supposing figures invented, they will have the appearance of being forced: and in this case, they had much better be omitted.

In the third place, even when imagination prompts, and the subject naturally gives rise to figures, they must, however, not be employed too frequently. In all beauty, "*simplex munditiis*," is a capital quality. Nothing derogates more from the weight and dignity of any composition, than too great attention to ornament. When the ornaments cost labour, that labour always appears; though they should cost us none, still the reader or hearer may be surfeited with them; and when they come too thick, they give the impression of a light and frothy genius, that evaporates in show, rather than brings forth what is solid. The directions of the ancient critics, on this head, are full of good sense, and deserve careful attention. "*Voluptatibus maximis*," says Cicero, *de Orat.* L. iii. "*fastidium finitimum est in rebus omnibus; quo hoc minus in oratione miremur. In qua vel ex poetis, vel oratoribus possumus judicare, concinnam, ornatam, festivam sine intermissione, quamvis claris sit coloribus picta, vel poësis, vel*

“ oratio, non posse, in delectatione esse diuturna.

“ Quare, bene, et præclare, quamvis nobis sæpe

“ dicatur, belle et festivo nimium sæpe nolo*.”

To the same purpose, are the excellent directions with which Quintilian concludes his discourse concerning figures, L. ix. C. 3. “ Ego illud de iis fi-

“ guris quæ vere fiunt, adjiciam breviter, sicut

“ ornant orationem opportunæ positæ, ita ineptif-

“ simas esse cum immodice petuntur. Sunt, qui

“ neglecto rerum pondere et viribus sententiarum,

“ si vel inania verba in hos modos depravarunt,

“ summos se judicant artifices ; ideoque non desi-

“ nunt eas necere ; quas sine sententia sectare,

“ tam est ridiculum quam quærere habitum ges-

“ tumque sine corpore. Ne hæ quidem quæ rec-

“ tæ fiunt, densandæ sunt nimis. Sciendum impri-

“ mis quid quisque postulet locus, quid persona,

“ quid tempus. Major enim pars harum figura-

“ rum posita est in delectatione. Ubi vero, a-

“ trocitate, invidia, miseratione pugnandum est ;

“ quis ferat verbis contraposis, et consimilibus,

“ et pariter cadentibus, irascentem, fentem, ro-

“ gantem ? Cum in his rebus, cura verborum de-

“ roget affectibus fidem ; et ubicunque ars osten-

“ tatur, veritas abesse videatur.†” After these

judicious and useful observations, I have no more to add, on this subject, except this admonition :

In the fourth place, that without a genius for figurative language, none should attempt it. Ima-

* “ In all human things, disgust borders so nearly on the most lively pleasures, that we need not be surprised to find this hold in eloquence. From reading either poets or orators we may easily satisfy ourselves; that neither a poem nor an oration, which, without intermission, is showy and sparkling, can please us long. Wherefore, though we may wish for the frequent praise of having expressed ourselves well and properly, we should not covet repeated applause, for being bright and splendid.”

† “ I must add concerning those figures which are proper

gination is a power not to be acquired ; it must be derived from nature. Its redundancies we may prune, its deviations we may correct, its sphere we may enlarge ; but the faculty itself we cannot create : and all efforts towards a metaphorical ornamented style, if we are destitute of the proper genius for it, will prove awkward and disgusting. Let us satisfy ourselves, however, by considering, that without this talent, or at least with a very small measure of it, we may both write and speak to advantage. Good sense, clear ideas, perspicuity of language; and proper arrangement of words and thoughts, will always command attention. These are, indeed, the foundations of all solid merit, both in speaking and writing. Many subjects require nothing more ; and those which admit of ornament, admit it, only as a secondary requisite. To study and to know our own genius well—to follow nature—to seek to improve, but not to force it—are directions which cannot be too often given to those who desire to excel in the liberal arts.

in themselves, that as they beautify a composition when they are seasonably introduced, so they deform it greatly, if too frequently sought after. There are some, who, neglecting strength of sentiment and weight of matter, if they can only force their empty words into a figurative style, imagine themselves great writers, and therefore continually string together such ornaments ; which is just as ridiculous, where there is no sentiment to support them, as to contrive gestures and dresses for what wants a body. Even those figures which a subject admits, must not come too thick. We must begin, with considering what the occasion, the time, and the person who speaks, render proper. For the object aimed at by the greater part of these figures, is entertainment. But when the subject becomes deeply serious, and strong passions are to be moved, who can bear the orator, who, in affected language and balanced phrases, endeavours to express wrath, commiseration, or earnest entreaty ? On all such occasions, a solicitous attention to words weakens passion ; and when so much art is shown, there is suspected to be little sincerity."

When I entered on the consideration of style, I observed, that words being the copies of our ideas, there must always be a very intimate connexion between the manner in which every writer employs words, and his manner of thinking; and that, from the peculiarity of thought and expression which belongs to him, there is a certain character imprinted on his style, which may be denominated his manner; commonly expressed by such general terms, as strong, weak, dry, simple, affected, or the like. These distinctions carry, in general, some reference to an author's manner of thinking, but refer chiefly to his mode of expression. They arise from the whole tenor of his language; and comprehend the effect produced by all those parts of style which we have already considered; the choice which he makes of single words; his arrangement of these in sentences; the degree of his precision; and his embellishment, by means of musical cadence, figures, and other arts of speech. Of such general characters of style, therefore, it remains now to speak, as the result of those underparts of which I have hitherto treated.

That different subjects require to be treated of in different sorts of style, is a position so obvious, that I shall not stay to illustrate it. Every one sees, that treatises of philosophy, for instance, ought not to be composed in the same style with orations. Every one sees also, that different parts of the same composition require a variation in the style and manner. In a sermon, for instance, or any harangue, the application or peroration admits more ornament, and requires more warmth than the didactic part. But what I mean at present to remark is, that, amidst this variety, we still expect to find, in the compositions of any one man, some degree of uniformity or consistency with himself in manner; we expect to find some predominant cha-

acter of style impressed on all his writings, which shall be suited to, and shall mark his particular genius, and turn of mind. The orations in Livy differ much in style, as they ought to do, from the rest of his history. The same is the case with those in Tacitus. Yet both in Livy's orations, and in those of Tacitus, we are able clearly to trace the distinguishing manner of each historian; the magnificent fulness of the one, and the sententious conciseness of the other. The "*Lettres Persanes*," and "*L'Esprit de Loix*," are the works of the same author. They required very different composition surely; and accordingly they differ widely: yet still we see the same hand. Wherever there is real and native genius, it gives a determination to one kind of style rather than another. Where nothing of this appears—where there is no marked nor peculiar character in the compositions of any author—we are apt to infer, not without reason, that he is a vulgar and trivial author, who writes from imitation, and not from the impulse of original genius. As the most celebrated painters are known by their hand, so the best and most original writers are known and distinguished, throughout all their works, by their style and peculiar manner. This will be found to hold almost without exception.

The ancient critics attended to these general characters of style which we are now to consider. Dionysius of Halicarnassus divides them into three kinds; and calls them the austere, the florid, and the middle. By the austere, he means a style distinguished for strength and firmness, with a neglect of smoothness and ornament; for examples of which, he gives Pindar and Æschylus among the poets, and Thucydides among the prose writers. By the florid he means, as the name indicates, a style ornamented, flowing, and sweet; resting more upon numbers and grace, than

strength : he instances Hesiod, Sappho, Anacreon, Euripides, and principally Isocrates. The middle kind is the just mean between these, and comprehends the beauties of both ; in which class he places Homer and Sophocles among the poets ; in prose, Herodotus, Demosthenes, Plato, and (what seems strange) Aristotle. This must be a very wide class indeed, which comprehends Plato and Aristotle under one article as to style*. Cicero and Quintilian make also a threefold division of style, though with respect to different qualities of it ; in which they are followed by most of the modern writers on rhetoric ; the *simplex*, *tenuis*, or *subtile* ; the *grave* or *vehemens* ; and the *medium*, or, *temperatum genus dicendi*. But these divisions, and the illustrations they give of them, are so loose and general, that they cannot advance us much in our ideas of style. I shall endeavour to be a little more particular in what I have to say on this subject.

One of the first and most obvious distinctions of the different kinds of style, is what arises from an author's spreading out his thoughts more or less. This distinction forms, what are called the diffuse and the concise styles. A concise writer compresses his thought into the fewest possible words ; he seeks to employ none but such as are most expressive ; he lops off, as redundant, every expression which does not add something material to the sense. Ornament he does not reject ; he may be lively and figured ; but his ornament is intended for the sake of force, rather than grace. He never gives you the same thought twice. He places it in the light, which appears to him the most striking ; but if you do not apprehend it well in that light, you need not expect to find it in any other. His sentences are arranged with compactness and strength, rather

* De compositione verborum, cap. 25.

than with cadence and harmony. The utmost precision is studied in them ; and they are commonly designed to suggest more to the reader's imagination than they directly express.

A diffuse writer unfolds his thought fully. He places it in a variety of lights, and gives the reader every possible assistance for understanding it completely. He is not very careful to express it at first in its full strength ; because he is to repeat the impression ; and what he wants in strength, he proposes to supply by copiousness. Writers of this character generally love magnificence and amplification. Their periods naturally run out into some length ; and having room for ornament of every kind, they admit it freely.

Each of these manners has its peculiar advantages ; and each becomes faulty when carried to the extreme. The extreme of conciseness becomes abrupt and obscure ; it is apt also to lead into a style too pointed, and bordering on the epigrammatic. The extreme of diffuseness becomes weak and languid, and tires the reader. However, to one or other of these two manners, a writer may lean according as his genius prompts him ; and, under the general character of a concise, or of a more open and diffuse style, may possess much beauty in his composition.

For illustrations of these general characters, I can only refer to the writers who are examples of them. It is not so much from detached passages, such as I was wont formerly to quote for instances, as from the current of an author's style, that we are to collect the idea of a formed manner of writing. The two most remarkable examples that I know, of conciseness carried as far as propriety will allow, perhaps in some cases farther, are Tacitus the historian, and the president Montesquieu in "*L'Esprit de Loix*." Aristotle too holds an eminent rank,

among didactic writers, for his brevity. Perhaps no writer in the world was ever so frugal of his words as Aristotle ; but this frugality of expression frequently darkens his meaning. Of a beautiful and magnificent diffuseness, Cicero is, beyond doubt, the most illustrious instance that can be given. Addison also, and sir William Temple, come in some degree under this class.

In judging when it is proper to lean to the concise, and when to the diffuse manner, we must be directed by the nature of the composition. Discourses that are to be spoken, require a more copious style, than books that are to be read. When the whole meaning must be caught from the mouth of the speaker, without the advantage which books afford, of pausing at pleasure, and reviewing what appears obscure, great conciseness is always to be avoided. We should never presume too much on the quickness of our hearer's understanding ; but our style ought to be such, that the bulk of men can go along with us easily, and without effort. A flowing, copious style, therefore, is required in all public speakers ; guarding, at the same time, against such a degree of diffusion as renders them languid and tiresome ; which will always prove the case, when they inculcate too much, and present the same thought under too many different views.

In written compositions, a certain degree of conciseness possesses great advantages. It is more lively ; keeps up attention ; makes a brisker and stronger impression ; and gratifies the mind by supplying more exercise to a reader's own thought. A sentiment, which, expressed diffusely, will barely be admitted to be just, expressed concisely, will be admired as spirited. Description, when we want to have it vivid and animated, should be in a concise strain. This is different from the common

opinion ; most persons being ready to suppose, that upon description a writer may dwell more safely than upon other things, and that by a full and extended style, it is rendered more rich and expressive. I apprehend, on the contrary, that a diffuse manner generally weakens it. Any redundant words or circumstances encumber the fancy, and make the object we present to it, appear confused and indistinct. Accordingly the most masterly describers, Homer, Tacitus, Milton, are almost always concise in their descriptions. They show us more of an object at one glance, than a feeble, diffuse writer can show, by turning it round and round in a variety of lights. The strength and vivacity of description, whether in prose or poetry, depend much more upon the happy choice of one or two striking circumstances, than upon the multiplication of them.

Addressees to the passions, likewise, ought to be in the concise, rather than the diffuse manner. In these, it is dangerous to be diffuse, because it is very difficult to support proper warmth for any length of time. When we become prolix, we are always in hazard of cooling the reader. The heart, too, and the fancy run fast ; and if once we can put them in motion, they supply many particulars to greater advantage, than an author can display them. The case is different, when we address ourselves to the understanding ; as in all matters of reasoning, explication, and instruction. There I would prefer a more free and diffuse manner. When you are to strike the fancy, or to move the heart, be concise ; when you are to inform the understanding, which moves more slowly, and requires the assistance of a guide, it is better to be full. Historical narration may be beautiful, either in a concise or a diffuse manner, according to the writer's genius. Livy and Herodotus are diffuse ;

Thucydides and Sallust are succinct; yet all of them are agreeable.

I observed, that a diffuse style generally abounds in long periods; and a concise writer, it is certain, will often employ short sentences. It is not, however, to be inferred from this, that long or short sentences are fully characteristic of the one, or the other manner. It is very possible for one to compose always in short sentences, and to be withal extremely diffuse, if a small measure of sentiment be spread through many of these sentences. Seneca is a remarkable example. By the shortness and quaintness of his sentences, he may appear at first view very concise; yet he is far from being so. He transfigures the same thought into many different forms. He makes it pass for a new one, only by giving it a new turn. So also, most of the French writers compose in short sentences: though their style, in general, is not concise; commonly less so than the bulk of English writers, whose sentences are much longer. A French author breaks down into two or three sentences, that portion of thought which an English author crowds into one. The direct effect of short sentences, is to render the style brisk and lively, but not always concise. By the quick successive impulses which they make on the mind, they keep it awake; and give to composition more of a spirited character. Long periods, like lord Clarendon's, are grave and stately; but, like all grave things, they are in hazard of becoming dull. An intermixture of both long and short ones is requisite, when we would support solemnity, together with vivacity; leaning more to the one or the other, according as propriety requires that the solemn or the sprightly should be predominant in our composition. But of long and short sentences, I had occasion, formerly, to treat, under the head of the construction of periods.

The nervous and the feeble, are generally held to be characters of style, of the same import with the concise and the diffuse. They do indeed very often coincide. Diffuse writers have, for the most part, some degree of feebleness; and nervous writers will generally be inclined to a concise expression. This, however, does not always hold; and there are instances of writers, who, in the midst of a full and ample style, have maintained a great degree of strength. Livy is an example; and in the English language, dr. Barrow. Barrow's style has many faults. It is unequal, incorrect, and redundant; but withal, for force and expressiveness, uncommonly distinguished. On every subject, he multiplies words with an overflowing copiousness; but it is always a torrent of strong ideas and significant expressions which he pours forth. Indeed, the foundations of a nervous or a weak style are laid in an author's manner of thinking. If he conceives an object strongly, he will express it with energy: but, if he has only an indistinct view of his subject—if his ideas be loose and wavering—if his genius be such, or, at the time of his writing, so carelessly exerted, that he has no firm hold of the conception which he would communicate to us; the marks of all this will clearly appear in his style. Several unmeaning words and loose epithets will be found; his expressions will be vague and general; his arrangement indistinct and feeble; we shall conceive somewhat of his meaning; but our conception will be faint. Whereas a nervous writer, whether he employs an extended or a concise style, gives us always a strong impression of his meaning; his mind is full of his subject, and his words are all expressive; every phrase and every figure which he uses, tends to render the picture, which he would set before us, more lively and complete.

I observed, under the head of diffuse and concise

style, that an author might lean either to the one or to the other, and yet be beautiful. This is not the case with respect to the nervous and the feeble. Every author, in every composition, ought to study to express himself with some strength, and, in proportion as he approaches to the feeble, he becomes a bad writer. In all kinds of writing, however, the same degree of strength is not demanded. But the more grave and weighty any composition is, the more should a character of strength predominate in the style. Hence, in history, philosophy, and solemn discourses, it is expected most. One of the most complete models of a nervous style, is Demosthenes in his orations.

As: every good quality in style has an extreme, when pursued to which it becomes faulty, this holds of the nervous style as well as others. Too great a study of strength, to the neglect of the other qualities of style, is found to betray writers into a harsh manner. Harshness arises from unusual words, from forced inversions in the construction of a sentence, and too much neglect of smoothness and ease. This is reckoned the fault of some of our earliest classics in the English language; such as sir Walter Raleigh, sir Francis Bacon, Hooker, Chillingworth, Milton in his prose works, Harrington, Cudworth, and other writers of considerable note in the days of queen Elizabeth, James I. and Charles I. These writers had nerves and strength in a high degree, and are to this day eminent for that quality in style. But the language in their hands was exceedingly different from what it is now, and was indeed entirely formed upon the idiom and construction of the Latin in the arrangement of sentences. Hooker, for instance, begins the preface to his celebrated work of ecclesiastical polity, with the following sentence: " Though for no other cause, yet for this, that

“ posterity may know we have not loosely, through
 “ silence, permitted things to pass away as in
 “ a dream, there shall be, for men’s information,
 “ extant this much, concerning the present
 “ state of the church of God established amongst
 “ us, and their careful endeavours which would
 “ have upheld the same.” Such a sentence now
 sounds harsh in our ears. Yet some advantages
 certainly attended this sort of style ; and whether
 we have gained or lost, upon the whole, by departing
 from it, may bear a question. By the freedom of
 arrangement, which it permitted, it rendered the
 language susceptible of more strength, of more
 variety of collocation, and more harmony of period.
 But however this be, such a style is now obsolete ;
 and no modern writer could adopt it without the
 censure of harshness and affectation. The present
 form which the language has assumed, has, in some
 measure, sacrificed the study of strength to that of
 perspicuity and ease. Our arrangement of words
 has become less forcible, perhaps, but more plain
 and natural : and this is now understood to be the
 genius of our language.

The restoration of king Charles II. seems to be
 the era of the formation of our present style. Lord
 Clarendon was one of the first who laid aside those
 frequent inversions which prevailed among writers
 of the former age. After him, sir William Temple
 polished the language still more. But the author,
 who, by the number and reputation of his works,
 formed it, more than any one, into its present
 state, is Dryden. Dryden began to write at the
 restoration, and continued long an author both in
 poetry and prose. He had made the language his
 study ; and though he wrote hastily, and often
 incorrectly, and his style is not free from faults,
 yet there is a richness in his diction, a co-

piousness, ease and variety in his expression, which has not been surpassed by any who have come after him*. Since his time, considerable attention has been paid to purity and elegance of style : But it is elegance rather than strength, that forms the distinguishing quality of most of the good English writers. Some of them compose in a more manly and nervous manner than others ; but, whether it be from the genius of our language, or from whatever other cause, it appears to me, that we are far from the strength of several of the Greek and Roman authors.

Hitherto we have considered style under those characters that respect its expressiveness of an author's meaning. Let us now proceed to consider it in another view, with respect to the degree of ornament employed to beautify it. Here, the style of different authors seems to rise, in the following gradation : a dry, a plain, a neat, an elegant, a flowery manner. Of each of these in their order.

First, a dry manner. This excludes all ornament of every kind. Content with being understood, it has not the least aim to please, either the fancy or the ear. This is tolerable only in pure didactic writing ; and even there, to make us bear it, great weight and solidity of matter is requisite, and entire perspicuity of language. Aristotle is the complete example of a dry style. Never, perhaps, was

* Dr. Johnson, in his life of Dryden, gives the following character of his prose style : " His prefaces have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled ; every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid ; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous ; what is little, is gay ; what is great, is splendid. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble ; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh : and though, since his earlier works, more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete."

there any author who adhered so rigidly to the strictness of a didactic manner, throughout all his writings, and conveyed so much instruction, without the least approach to ornament. With the most profound genius, and extensive views, he writes like a pure intelligence, who addresses himself solely to the understanding, without making any use of the channel of the imagination. But this is a manner which deserves not to be imitated. For, although the goodness of the matter may compensate the dryness or harshness of the style, yet is that dryness a considerable defect ; as it fatigues attention, and conveys our sentiments, with disadvantage, to the reader or hearer.

A plain style rises one degree above a dry one. A writer of this character employs very little ornament of any kind, and rests almost entirely upon his sense. But, if he is at no pains to engage us by the employment of figures, musical arrangement, or any other art of writing, he studies, however, to avoid disgusting us like a dry and a harsh writer. Besides perspicuity, he pursues propriety, purity, and precision, in his language ; which form one degree, and no inconsiderable one, of beauty. Liveliness, too, and force, may be consistent with a very plain style : and therefore, such an author, if his sentiments be good, may be abundantly agreeable. The difference between a dry and plain writer, is, that the former is incapable of ornament, and seems not to know what it is ; the latter seeks not after it. He gives us his meaning, in good language, distinct and pure ; any further ornament he gives himself no trouble about ; either, because he thinks it unnecessary to his subject ; or, because his genius does not lead him to delight in it ; or, because it leads him to despise it*.

* On this head, of the general characters of style, part.
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This last was the case with dean Swift, who may be placed at the head of those that have employed the plain style. Few writers have discovered more capacity. He treats every subject which he handles, whether serious or ludicrous, in a masterly manner. He knew, almost, beyond any man, the purity, the extent, the precision of the English language; and, therefore, to such as wish to attain a pure and correct style, he is one of the most useful models. But we must not look for much ornament and grace in his language. His haughty and morose genius made him despise any embellishment of this kind, as beneath his dignity. He delivers his sentiments in a plain, downright, positive manner, like one who is sure he is in the right, and is very indifferent whether you be pleased or not. His sentences are commonly negligently arranged; distinctly enough as to the sense; but without any regard to smoothness of sound; often without much regard to compactness, or elegance. If a metaphor, or any other figure, chanced to render his satire more poignant, he would, perhaps, vouchsafe to adopt it, when it came in his way; but if it tended only to embellish and illustrate, he would rather throw it aside. Hence, in his serious pieces, his style often borders upon the dry and unpleasing; in his humorous ones, the plainness of his manner sets off his wit to the highest advantage. There is no froth, nor affectation in it; it seems native and unstudied; and while he hardly appears to smile himself, he makes his reader laugh heartily. To a writer of such a genius

especially the plain and the simple, and the characters of the English authors who are classed under them, in this and the following lecture, several ideas have been taken from a manuscript treatise on rhetoric, part of which was shown to me many years ago, by the learned and ingenious author, Dr Adam Smith; and which, it is hoped, will be given by him to the public.

as dean Swift, the plain style was most admirably fitted. Among our philosophical writers, mr. Locke comes under this class ; perspicuous and pure, but almost without any ornament whatever. In works which admit, or require, ever so much ornament, there are parts where the plain manner ought to predominate. But we must remember, that when this is the character which a writer affects throughout his whole composition, great weight of matter, and great force of sentiment, are required, in order to keep up the reader's attention, and prevent him from becoming tired of the author.

What is called a neat style comes next in order ; and here we have got into the region of ornament, but that ornament not of the highest or most sparkling kind. A writer of this character shows, that he does not despise the beauty of language. It is an object of his attention. But his attention is shown in the choice of his words, and in a graceful collocation of them ; rather than in any high efforts of imagination, or eloquence. His sentences are always clean, and free from the incumbrance of superfluous words ; of a moderate length ; rather inclining to brevity, than a swelling structure ; closing with propriety ; without any tails or adjections dragging after the proper close. His cadence is varied ; but not of the studied musical kind. His figures, if he uses any, are short and correct, rather than bold and glowing. Such a style as this, may be attained by a writer who has no great powers of fancy or genius ; by industry merely, and careful attention to the rules of writing ; and it is a style always agreeable. It imprints a character of moderate elevation on our composition, and carries a decent degree of ornament, which is not unsuitable to any subject whatever. A familiar letter, or a law paper, on the driest subject, may be written with neat-

ness ; and a sermon, or a philosophical treatise, in a neat style, will be read with pleasure.

An elegant style is a character, expressing a higher degree of ornament than a neat one ; and, indeed, is the term usually applied to style, when possessing all the virtues of ornament, without any of its excesses or defects. From what has been formerly delivered, it will easily be understood, that complete elegance implies, great perspicuity and propriety ; purity in the choice of words, and care and dexterity in their harmonious and happy arrangement. It implies, farther, the grace and beauty of imagination spread over style, as far as the subject admits it ; and all the illustration which figurative language adds, when properly employed. In a word, an elegant writer is one who pleases the fancy and the ear, while he informs the understanding ; and who gives us his ideas clothed with all the beauty of expression, but not overcharged with any of its misplaced finery. In this class, therefore, we place only the first-rate writers in the language ; such as, Addison, Dryden, Pope, Temple, Bolingbroke, Atterbury, and a few more : writers who differ widely from one another in many of the attributes of style, but whom we now class together under the denomination of elegant, as, in the scale of ornament, possessing nearly the same place.

When the ornaments, applied to style, are too rich and gaudy in proportion to the subject—when they return upon us too fast, and strike us either with a dazzling lustre or a false brilliancy—this forms what is called a florid style ; a term commonly used to signify the excess of ornament. In a young composer this is very pardonable. Perhaps, it is even a promising symptom in young people, that their style should incline to the florid and luxuriant : “ Volo se efferat in adolescente facun-

“ditas,” says Quintilian; “multum inde de-
 “quent anni, multum ratio limabit, aliquid velut
 “usu ipso deteretur; sit modo unde excidi possit
 “quid et exculpi. Audeat hæc ætas plura, et in-
 “veniat, et inventis gaudeat; sint licet illa non fa-
 “tis interim sicca et severa. Facile remedium est
 “ubertatis: sterilia nullo labore vincuntur*.”

But, although the florid style may be allowed to youth in their first essays, it must not receive the same indulgence from writers of maturer years. It is to be expected, that judgment, as it ripens, should chasten imagination, and reject, as juvenile, all such ornaments as are redundant, unsuitable to the subject, or not conducive to illustrate it. Nothing can be more contemptible than that tinsel splendor of language, which some writers perpetually affect. It were well, if this could be ascribed to the real overflowing of a rich imagination. We should then have something to amuse us, at least, if we found little to instruct us. But the worst is, that with those frothy writers, it is a luxuriancy of words, not of fancy. We see a laboured attempt to rise to a splendor of composition, of which they have formed to themselves some loose idea; but having no strength of genius for attaining it, they endeavour to supply the defect by poetical words, by cold exclamations, by common-place figures, and every thing that has the appearance of pomp and magnificence. It has escaped these writers, that sobriety in orna-

* “In youth, I wish to see luxuriancy of fancy appear. Much of it will be diminished by years; much will be corrected by ripening judgment; some of it, by the mere practice of composition, will be worn away. Let there be only sufficient matter at first, that can bear some pruning and lopping off. At this time of life, let genius be bold and inventive, and pride itself in its efforts, though they should not, as yet, be correct. Luxuriancy can easily be cured; but for barrenness there is no remedy.”

ment, is one great secret for rendering it pleasing ; and that, without a foundation of good sense and solid thought, the most florid style is but a childish imposition on the public. The public, however, are but too apt to be imposed on ; at least, the mob of readers, who are very ready to be caught, at first, with whatever is dazzling and gaudy.

I cannot help thinking, that it reflects more honour on the religious turn, and good dispositions of the present age, than on the public taste, that mr. Hervey's meditations have had so great a currency. The pious and benevolent heart, which is always displayed in them, and the lively fancy which, on some occasions, appears, justly merits applause : but the perpetual glitter of expression, the swollen imagery and strained description which abound in them, are ornaments of a false kind. I would, therefore, advise students of oratory to imitate mr. Hervey's piety, rather than his style, and, in all compositions of a serious kind, to turn their attention, as mr. Pope says, " from sounds to things, " from fancy to the heart." Admonitions of this kind, I have already had occasion to give, and may hereafter repeat them ; as I conceive nothing more incumbent on me in this course of lectures, than to take every opportunity of cautioning my readers against the affected and frivolous use of ornament ; and, instead of that slight and superficial taste in writing, which I apprehend to be at present too fashionable, to introduce, as far as my endeavours can avail, a taste for more solid thought, and more manly simplicity in style.

LECTURE XIX.

GENERAL CHARACTERS OF STYLE— SIMPLE, AFFECTED, VEHEMENT.— DIRECTIONS FOR FORMING A PROPER STYLE.

HAVING entered, in the last lecture, on the consideration of the general characters of style, I treated of the concise and diffuse, the nervous and feeble manner, I considered style, also, with relation to the different degrees of ornament employed to beautify it ; in which view, the manner of different authors rises according to the following gradation : dry, plain, neat, elegant, flowery.

I am next to treat of style under another character, one of great importance in writing, and which requires to be accurately examined, that of simplicity, or a natural style, as distinguished from affectation. Simplicity, applied to writing, is a term very frequently used, but, like many other critical terms, often used loosely, and without precision. This has been owing chiefly to the different meanings given to the word, simplicity, which, therefore, it will be necessary here to distinguish ; and to show in what sense it is a proper attribute of style. We may remark four different acceptations in which it is taken.

+ The first is, simplicity of composition, as opposed to too great a variety of parts. Horace's precept refers to this :

Denique sit quod vis simplex duntaxat et unum*.

This is the simplicity of plan in a tragedy, as distinguished from double plots, and crowded incidents ; the simplicity of the Iliad, or Æneid, in opposition to the digressions of Lucan, and the scattered tales of Ariosto ; the simplicity of Grecian architecture, in opposition to the irregular variety of the Gothic. In this sense, simplicity is the same with unity.

+ The second sense is simplicity of thought, as opposed to refinement. Simple thoughts are what arise naturally ; what the occasion or the subject suggest unsought ; and what, when once suggested, are easily apprehended by all. Refinement in writing, expresses a less natural and obvious train of thought, and which it required a peculiar turn of genius to pursue ; within certain bounds, very beautiful ; but when carried too far, approaching to intricacy, and hurting us by the appearance of being *recherché*, or far sought. Thus, we would naturally say, that Mr. Parnell is a poet of far greater simplicity, in his turn of thought, than Mr. Cowley ; Cicero's thoughts on moral subjects are natural ; Seneca's too refined and laboured. In these two senses of simplicity, when it is opposed, either to variety of parts, or to refinement of thought, it has no proper relation to style.

There is a third sense of simplicity, in which it has respect to style ; and stands opposed to too much ornament, or pomp of language ; as when

* " Then learn the wand'ring humour to controul,
" And keep one equal tenor through the whole."

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we say, Mr. Locke is a simple, Mr. Hervey a florid writer; and it is in this sense, that the "*simplex*," the "*tenuis*," or "*subtile genus dicendi*," is understood by Cicero and Quintilian. The simple style, in this sense, coincides with the plain or the neat style, which I before mentioned; and, therefore, requires no farther illustration.

But there is a fourth sense of simplicity, also respecting style; but not respecting the degree of ornament employed, so much as the easy and natural manner in which our language expresses our thoughts. This is quite different from the former sense of the word, just now mentioned, in which simplicity was equivalent to plainness; whereas, in this sense, it is compatible with the highest ornament. Homer, for instance, possesses this simplicity in the greatest perfection; and yet no writer has more ornament and beauty. This simplicity, which is what we are now to consider, stands opposed, not to ornament, but to affectation of ornament, or appearance of labour about our style; and it is a distinguishing excellency in writing.

A writer of simplicity expresses himself in such a manner, that every one thinks he could have written in the same way; Horace, describes it,

—— ut sibi quivis
Speret idem, fuder multum, frustra que laboret
Ausus idem*.

There are no marks of art in his expression; it seems the very language of nature; you see in the style, not the writer and his labour, but the man, in his own natural character. He may be rich in his expression; he may be full of figures, and

* "From well known tales such fictions would I raise,
As all might hope to imitate with ease;
Yet, while they strive the same success to gain,
Should find their labours, and their hopes in vain."

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of fancy ; but these flow from him without effort ; and he appears to write in this manner, not because he has studied it, but because it is the manner of expression most natural to him. A certain degree of negligence, also, is not inconsistent with this character of style, and even not ungraceful in it ; for too minute an attention to words is foreign to it : “ *Habeat ille,*” says Cicero, (Orat. No. 77.) “ *molle quiddam, et quod indicet non ingrati negligentiam hominis, de re magis quam de verbo laborantis**.” This is the great advantage of simplicity of style, that, like simplicity of manners, it shows us a man’s sentiments and turn of mind laid open without disguise. More studied and artificial manners of writing, however beautiful, have always this disadvantage, that they exhibit an author in form, like a man at court, where the splendor of dress, and the ceremonial of behaviour, conceal those peculiarities which distinguish one man from another. But reading an author of simplicity, is like conversing with a person of distinction at home, and with ease, where we find natural manners, and a marked character.

The highest degree of this simplicity, is expressed by a French term, to which we have none that fully answers in our language, *naïveté*. It is not easy to give a precise idea of the import of this word. It always expresses a discovery of character. I believe the best account of it is given by a French critic, M. Marmontel, who explains it thus : That sort of amiable ingenuity, or undisguised openness, which seems to give us some degree of superiority over the person who shows it ; a certain infantine simplicity, which we love in our hearts, but

* “ Let this style have a certain softness and ease, which shall characterise a negligence, not displeasing in an author, who appears to be more solicitous about the thought than the expression.”

which displays some features of the character that we think we could have art enough to hide ; and which, therefore, always leads us to smile at the person who discovers this character. La Fontaine, in his fables, is given as the great example of such *naïveté*. This, however, is to be understood, as descriptive of a particular species only of simplicity.

With respect to simplicity, in general, we may remark, that the ancient original writers are always the most eminent for it. This happens from a plain reason, that they wrote from the dictates of natural genius, and were not formed upon the labours and writings of others, which is always in hazard of producing affectation. Hence among the Greek writers, we have more models of a beautiful simplicity than among the Roman. Homer, Hesiod, Anacreon, Theocritus, Herodotus, and Xenophon, are all distinguished for it. Among the Romans also, we have some writers of this character, particularly Terence, Lucretius, Phœdrus, and Julius Cæsar. The following passage of Terence's *Andria*, is a beautiful instance of simplicity of manner in description :

Funus interim

Procedit; sequimur; ad sepulchrum venimus;
In ignem imposita est; fletur. Interea hæc soror
Quam dixi, ad flammam accessit imprudentius
Satis cum periculo. Ibi tum exanimatus Pamphilus,
Bene dissimulatum amorem, & celatum indicat;
Occurrit præceps, mulierem ab igne retrahit,
Mea Glycerium, inquit, quid agis? Cur te is perditum?
Tum illa, ut consuetum facile amorem cerneret,
Rejecit se in eum, flens quam familiariter*.

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“ * Meanwhile the funeral proceeds ; we follow ;
Come to the sepulchre : the body's placed
Upon the pile ; lamented ; whereupon
This sister, I was speaking of, all wild,
Ran to the flames with peril of her life,
There ! there ! the frightened Pamphilus betrays

All the words here are remarkably happy and elegant ; and convey a most lively picture of the scene described : while, at the same time, the style appears wholly artless and unlaboured. Let us, next, consider some English writers who come under this class.

Simplicity is the great beauty of archbishop Tillotson's manner. Tillotson has long been admired as an eloquent writer, and a model for preaching. But his eloquence, if we can call it such, has been often misunderstood. For, if we include, in the idea of eloquence, vehemence and strength, picturesque description, glowing figures, or correct arrangement of sentences, in all these parts of oratory the archbishop is exceedingly deficient. His style is always pure, indeed, and perspicuous, but careless and remiss, too often feeble and languid ; little beauty in the construction of his sentences, which are frequently suffered to drag unharmoniously ; seldom any attempt towards strength or sublimity. But, notwithstanding these defects, such a constant vein of good sense and piety runs through his works, such an earnest and serious manner, and so much useful instruction conveyed in a style so pure, natural, and unaffected, as will justly recommend him to high regard, as long as the English language remains ; not, indeed, as a model of the highest eloquence, but as a simple and amiable writer, whose manner is strongly expressive of great goodness and worth. I observed before, that simplici-

His well-dissembled and long-hidden love ;
Runs up, and takes her round the waist, and cries,
Oh ! my Glycerium ! what is it you do ?
Why, why, endeavour to destroy yourself ?
Then she, in such a manner, that you thence
Might easily perceive their long long love,
Threw herself back into his arms, and wept,
Oh ! how familiarly !

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ty of manner may be consistent with some degree of negligence in style ; and it is only the beauty of that simplicity which makes the negligence of such writers seem graceful. But, as appears in the archbishop, negligence may sometimes be carried so far as to impair the beauty of simplicity, and make it border on a flat and languid manner.

Sir William Temple is another remarkable writer in the style of simplicity. In point of ornament and correctness, he rises a degree above Tillotson : though for correctness, he is not in the highest rank. All is easy and flowing in him ; he is exceedingly harmonious ; smoothness, and what may be called amœnity, are the distinguishing characters of his manner ; relaxing, sometimes, as such a manner will naturally do, into a prolix and remiss style. No writer whatever has stamped upon his style a more lively impression of his own character. In reading his works, we seem engaged in conversation with him ; we become thoroughly acquainted with him, not merely as an author, but as a man ; and contract a friendship for him. He may be classed as standing in the middle, between a negligent simplicity, and the highest degree of ornament, which this character of style admits.

Of the latter of these, the highest, most correct, and ornamented degree of the simple manner, Mr. Addison is, beyond doubt, in the English language, the most perfect example : and, therefore, though not without some faults, he is, on the whole, the safest model for imitation, and the freest from considerable defects, which the language affords. Perspicuous and pure he is in the highest degree ; his precision, indeed, not very great ; yet nearly as great as the subjects which he treats of require : the construction of his sentences easy, agreeable, and commonly very musical ; carrying a character of smoothness, more than of strength. In figura-

tive language, he is rich ; particularly in similes and metaphors ; which are so employed, as to render his style splendid without being gaudy. There is not the least affectation in his manner ; we see no marks of labour ; nothing forced or constrained ; but great elegance joined with great ease and simplicity. He is, in particular, distinguished by a character of modesty, and of politeness, which appears in all his writings. No author has a more popular and insinuating manner ; and the great regard which he every where shows for virtue and religion, recommends him highly. If he fails in any thing, it is in want of strength and precision, which renders his manner, though perfectly suited to such essays as he writes in the *Spectator*, not altogether a proper model for any of the higher and more elaborate kinds of composition. Though the public have ever done much justice to his merit, yet the nature of his merit has not always been seen in its true light : for, though his poetry be elegant, he certainly bears a higher rank among the prose writers, than he is intitled to among the poets ; and, in prose, his humour is of a much higher, and more original strain, than his philosophy. The character of *sir Roger de Coverly* discovers more genius than the critique on Milton.

Such authors as those, whose characters I have been giving, one is never tired of reading. There is nothing in their manner that strains or fatigues our thoughts : we are pleased, without being dazzled by their lustre. So powerful is the charm of simplicity in an author of real genius, that it atones for many defects, and reconciles us to many a careless expression. Hence, in all the most excellent authors, both in prose and verse, the simple and natural manner may be always remarked ; although other beauties being predominant, this form not their peculiar and distinguishing character.

Thus Milton is simple in the midst of all his grandeur ; and Demosthenes in the midst of all his vehemence. To grave and solemn writings, simplicity of manner adds the more venerable air. Accordingly, this has often been remarked as the prevailing character throughout all the sacred scriptures ; and indeed no other character of style was so much suited to the dignity of inspiration.

Of authors, who, notwithstanding many excellencies, have rendered their style much less beautiful by want of simplicity, I cannot give a more remarkable example than lord Shaftsbury. This is an author on whom I have made observations several times before, and shall now take leave of him, with giving his general character under this head. Considerable merit, doubtless, he has. His works might be read with profit for the moral philosophy which they contain, had he not filled them with so many oblique and invidious insinuations against the christian religion, thrown out, too, with so much spleen and satire, as do no honour to his memory, either as an author or a man. His language has many beauties. It is firm, and supported in an uncommon degree : it is rich and musical. No English author, as I formerly showed, has attended so much to the regular construction of his sentences, both with respect to propriety, and with respect to cadence. All this gives so much elegance and pomp to his language, that there is no wonder it should have been highly admired by some. It is greatly hurt, however, by perpetual stiffness and affectation. This is its capital fault. His lordship can express nothing with simplicity. He seems to have considered it as vulgar, and beneath the dignity of a man of quality, to speak like other men. Hence he is ever in buskins, and dressed out with magnificent elegance. In every sentence, we see the marks of labour and art ; nothing of that ease,

which expresses a sentiment coming natural and warm from the heart. Of figures and ornament of every kind, he is exceedingly fond ; sometimes happy in them ; but his fondness for them is too visible ; and having once laid hold of some metaphor or allusion that pleased him, he knows not how to part with it. What is most wonderful, he was a professed admirer of simplicity ; is always extolling it in the ancients, and censuring the moderns for the want of it ; though he departs from it himself as far as any one modern whatever. Lord Shaftsbury possessed delicacy and refinement of taste, to a degree that we may call excessive and sickly ; but he had little warmth of passion ; few strong or vigorous feelings : and the coldness of his character led him to that artificial and stately manner which appears in his writings. He was fonder of nothing than of wit and raillery ; but he is far from being happy in it. He attempts it often, but always awkwardly ; he is stiff, even in his pleasantries ; and laughs in form, like an author, and not like a man*.

From the account which I have given of lord Shaftsbury's manner, it may easily be imagined, that he would mislead many who blindly admired him. Nothing is more dangerous to the tribe of imitators, than an author, who, with many imposing beauties, has also some very considerable blemishes. This is fully exemplified in mr. Blackwall of Aberdeen, the author of the life of Homer, the

* It may perhaps be not unworthy of being mentioned, that the first edition of his enquiry into virtue was published surreptitiously I believe, in a separate form, in the year 1669, and is sometimes to be met with ; by comparing which, with the corrected edition of the same treatise, as it now stands among his works, we see one of the most curious and useful examples that I know, of what is called *Lime labour* ; the art of polishing language, breaking long sentences, and working up an imperfect draught into a highly finished performance.

letters on mythology, and the court of Augustus ; a writer of considerable learning, and of ingenuity also ; but infected with an extravagant love of an artificial style, and of that parade of language which distinguishes the Shaftsburean manner.

Having now said so much to recommend simplicity or the easy and natural manner of writing, and having pointed out the defects of an opposite manner ; in order to prevent mistakes on this subject, it is necessary for me to observe, that it is very possible for an author to write simply, and yet not beautifully. One may be free from affectation, and not have merit. The beautiful simplicity supposes an author to possess real genius ; to write with solidity, purity, and liveliness of imagination. In this case, the simplicity or unaffectedness of his manner is the crowning ornament ; it heightens every other beauty ; it is the dress of nature, without which all beauties are imperfect. But if mere unaffectedness were sufficient to constitute the beauty of style, weak, trifling, and dull writers might often lay claim to this beauty. And, accordingly, we frequently meet with pretended critics, who extol the dullest writers on account of what they call the “ chaste simplicity of their manner ;” which, in truth, is no other than the absence of every ornament, through the mere want of genius and imagination. We must distinguish, therefore, between that simplicity which accompanies true genius, and which is perfectly compatible with every proper ornament of style, and that which is no other than a careless and slovenly manner. Indeed, the distinction is easily made, from the effect produced. The one never fails to interest the reader ; the other is insipid and tiresome.

I proceed to mention one other manner or character of style, different from any that I have yet spoken of ; which may be distinguished by the

name of the vehement. This always implies strength ; and is not by any means inconsistent with simplicity ; but, in its predominant character, is distinguishable from either the strong or the simple manner. It has a peculiar ardour ; it is a glowing style ; the language of a man, whose imagination and passions are heated, and strongly affected by what he writes ; who is therefore negligent of lesser graces, but pours himself forth with the rapidity and fulness of a torrent. It belongs to the higher kinds of oratory ; and indeed is rather expected from a man who is speaking, than from one who is writing in his closet. The orations of Demosthenes furnish the full and perfect example of this species of style.

Among English writers, the one who has most of this character, though mixed, indeed, with several defects, is lord Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke was formed by nature to be a factious leader ; the demagogue of a popular assembly. Accordingly, the style that runs through all his political writings, is that of one declaiming with heat, rather than writing with deliberation. He abounds in rhetorical figures ; and pours himself forth with great impetuosity. He is copious to a fault ; places the same thought before us in many different views ; but generally with life and ardour. He is bold, rather than correct ; a torrent that flows strong, but often muddy. His sentences are varied as to length and shortness ; inclining, however, most to long periods, sometimes including parentheses, and frequently crowding and heaping a multitude of things upon one another, as naturally happens in the warmth of speaking. In the choice of his words, there is great felicity and precision. In exact construction of sentences, he is much inferior to lord Shaftsbury ; but greatly superior to him in life and ease. Upon the whole, his merit, as a writer, would

have been very considerable, if his matter had equalled his style. But whilst we find many things to commend in the latter, in the former, as I before remarked, we can hardly find any thing to commend. In his reasonings, for the most part, he is flimsy and false ; in his political writings, factious ; in what he calls his philosophical ones, irreligious and sophistical in the highest degree.

I shall insist no longer on the different manners of writers, or the general characters of style. Some other, besides those which I have mentioned, might be pointed out ; but I am sensible, that it is very difficult to separate such general considerations of the style of authors from their peculiar turn of sentiment, which it is not my business at present to criticise. Conceited writers, for instance, discover their spirit so much in their composition, that it imprints on their style a character of pertness ; though I confess it is difficult to say, whether this can be classed among the attributes of style, or rather is to be ascribed entirely to the thought. In whatever class we rank it, all appearances of it ought to be avoided with care, as a most disgusting blemish, in writing. Under the general heads, which I have considered, I have taken an opportunity of giving the character of many of the eminent classics in the English language.

From what I have said on this subject, it may be inferred, that to determine, among all these different manners of writing, what is precisely the best, is neither easy nor necessary. Style is a field that admits of great latitude. Its qualities in different authors may be very different ; and yet in them all beautiful. Room must be left here for genius ; for that particular determination which every one receives from nature to one manner of expression more than another. Some general qualities, indeed, there are, of such importance, as should always,

in every kind of composition, be kept in view; and some defects we should always study to avoid. An ostentatious, a feeble, a harsh, or an obscure style, for instance, are always faults; and perspicuity, strength, neatness, and simplicity, are beauties to be always aimed at. But as to the mixture of all, or the degree of predominancy of any one of these good qualities, for forming our peculiar distinguishing manner, no precise rules can be given; nor will I venture to point out any one model as absolutely perfect.

It will be more to the purpose, that I conclude these dissertations upon style, with a few directions concerning the proper method of attaining a good style in general; leaving the particular character of that style to be either formed by the subject on which we write, or prompted by the bent of genius.

The first direction which I give for this purpose, is, to study clear ideas on the subject concerning which we are to write or speak. This is a direction which may at first appear to have small relation to style. Its relation to it, however, is extremely close. The foundation of all good style, is good sense accompanied with a lively imagination. The style and thoughts of a writer are so intimately connected, that, as I have several times hinted, it is frequently hard to distinguish them. Wherever the impressions of things upon our minds are faint and indistinct, or perplexed and confused, our style in treating of such things will infallibly be so too. Whereas, what we conceive clearly and feel strongly, we shall naturally express with clearness and with strength. This, then, we may be assured, is a capital rule as to style, to think closely of the subject, till we have attained a full and distinct view of the matter which we are to clothe in words, till we become warm and interested in it; then, and not till then, shall we find

expression begin to flow. Generally speaking, the best and most proper expressions, are those which a clear view of the subject suggests, without much labour or enquiry after them. This is Quintilian's observation, lib. viii. c. 1. "*Plerumque optima verba rebus coherent, et cernuntur suo lumine.*" At nos quærimus illa, tanquam lateant sequos subducant. Ita nunquam putamus verba esse circa id de quo dicendum est; sed ex aliis locis petimus, et inventis vim afferimus*."

In the second place, in order to form a good style, the frequent practice of composing is indispensably necessary. Many rules concerning style I have delivered; but no rules will answer the end without exercise and habit. At the same time, it is not every sort of composing that will improve style. This is so far from being the case, that by frequent, careless, and hasty composition, we shall acquire certainly a very bad style; we shall have more trouble afterwards in unlearning faults, and correcting negligences, than if we had not been accustomed to composition at all. In the beginning, therefore, we ought to write slowly, and with much care. Let the facility and speed of writing, be the fruit of longer practice. "*Moram et sollicitudinem,*" says Quintilian with the greatest reason, l. x. c. 3, "*initium impero. Nam primum hoc constituendum ac obtinendum, est, ut quam optime scribamus: celeritatem dabit consuetudo. Paulatim res facilius se ostendent, verba respondebunt, compositio profequetur. Cuncta denique ut in familia bene*"

* "The most proper words for the most part adhere to the thoughts which are to be expressed by them, and may be discovered as by their own light. But we hunt after them, as if they were hidden, and only to be found in a corner. Hence, instead of conceiving the words to lie near the subject, we go in quest of them to some other quarter, and endeavour to give force to the expressions we have found out."

“ instituta, in officio erunt. Summa hæc est rei ;
 “ cito scribendo, non fit ut bene scribatur ; bene
 “ scribendo, fit ut cito*.”

We must observe, however, that there may be an extreme, in too great and anxious a care about words. We must not retard the course of thought, nor cool the heat of imagination, by pausing too long on every word we employ. There is, on certain occasions, a glow of composition which should be kept up, if we hope to express ourselves happily, though at the expense of allowing some inadvertencies to pass. A more severe examination of these must be left to be the work of correction. For, if the practice of composition be useful, the laborious work of correcting is no less so ; is indeed absolutely necessary to our reaping any benefit from the habit of composition. What we have written, should be laid by for some little time, till the ardour of composition be past, till the fondness for the expressions we have used be worn off, and the expressions themselves be forgotten ; and then reviewing our work with a cool and critical eye, as if it were the performance of another, we shall discern many imperfections which at first escaped us. Then is the season for pruning redundancies ; for examining the arrangement of sentences ; for attending to the juncture and connecting particles ; and bringing style into a regular, correct, and supported form. This “ *Lima labor*” must be submitted to by all who would communicate their

* “ I enjoin that such as are beginning the practice of composition, write slowly, and with anxious deliberation. Their great object at first should be, to write as well as possible ; practice will enable them to write speedily. By degrees matter will offer itself still more readily ; words will be at hand ; composition will flow ; every thing, as in the arrangement of a well-ordered family, will present itself in its proper place. The sum of the whole is this ; by hasty composition, we shall never acquire the art of composing well ; by writing well, we shall come to write speedily.”

thoughts with proper advantage to others ; and some practice in it will soon sharpen their eye to the most necessary objects of attention, and render it a much more easy and practicable work than might at first be imagined.

In the third place, with respect to the assistance that is to be gained from the writings of others, it is obvious, that we ought to render ourselves well acquainted with the style of the best authors. This is requisite both in order to form a just taste in style, and to supply us with a full stock of words on every subject. In reading authors, with a view to style, attention should be given to the peculiarities of their different manners ; and in this, and former lectures, I have endeavoured to suggest several things that may be useful in this view. I know no exercise that will be found more useful for acquiring a proper style, than to translate some passage from an eminent English author into our own words. What I mean is, to take, for instance, some page of one of Mr. Addison's Spectators, and read it carefully over two or three times, till we have got a firm hold of the thoughts contained in it ; then to lay aside the book ; to attempt to write out the passage from memory, in the best way we can ; and having done so, next to open the book, and compare what we have written, with the style of the author. Such an exercise will, by comparison, show us where the defects of our style lie ; will lead us to the proper attentions for rectifying them ; and, among the different ways in which the same thought may be expressed, will make us perceive that which is the most beautiful. But,

In the fourth place, I must caution, at the same time, against a servile imitation of any author whatever. This is always dangerous. It hampers genius ; it is likely to produce a stiff manner ; and those who are given to close imitation, generally

Imitate an author's faults as well as his beauties. No man will ever become a good writer, or speaker, who has not some degree of confidence to follow his own genius. We ought to beware, in particular, of adopting any author's noted phrases, or transcribing passages from him. Such a habit will prove fatal to all genuine composition. Infinitely better it is to have something that is our own, though of moderate beauty, than to affect to shine in borrowed ornaments, which will, at last, betray the utter poverty of our genius. On these heads of composing, correcting, reading, and imitating, I advise every student of oratory to consult what Quintilian has delivered in the tenth book of his institutions, where he will find a variety of excellent observations and directions, that well deserve attention.

In the fifth place, it is an obvious, but material rule, with respect to style, that we always ~~must~~ adapt it to the subject, and also to the capacity of our hearers, if we are to speak in public. Nothing merits the name of eloquent or beautiful, which is not suited to the occasion, and to the persons to whom it is addressed. It is to the last degree awkward and absurd, to attempt a poetical florid style, on occasions, when it should be our business only to argue and reason ; or to speak with elaborate pomp of expression, before persons who comprehend nothing of it, and who can only stare at our unseasonable magnificence. These are defects not in so much in point of style, as, what is much worse, point of common sense. When we begin to write or speak, we ought previously to fix in our minds a clear conception of the end to be aimed at ; to keep this steadily in our view, and to suit our style to it. If we do not sacrifice to this great object, every ill-timed ornament that may occur to our fancy, we are unpardonable ; and though children and fools may admire, men of sense will laugh at us and our style.

In the last place, I cannot conclude the subject without this admonition, that, in any case, and on any occasion, attention to style must not engross us so much, as to detract from a higher degree of attention to the thoughts: "*Curam verborum*," says the great Roman critic, "*rerum volo esse sollicitudinem* *." A direction the more necessary, as the present taste of the age in writing, seems to lean more to style than to thought. It is much easier to dress up trivial and common sentiments with some beauty of expression, than to afford a fund of vigorous, ingenious, and useful thoughts. The latter requires true genius; the former may be attained by industry, with the help of very superficial parts. Hence, we find so many writers frivolously rich in style, but wretchedly poor in sentiment. The public ear is now so much accustomed to a correct and ornamented style, that no writer can, with safety, neglect the study of it. But he is a contemptible one, who does not look to something beyond it; who does not lay the chief stress upon his matter, and employ such ornaments of style to recommend it, as are manly, not foppish: "*Majore animo*," says the writer whom I have so often quoted, "*aggreddenda est eloquentia; quæ si toto corpore valet, ungues polire et capillum componere, non existimabit ad curam suam pertinere. Ornatus, et virilis, et fortis, et sanctus sit; nec effeminatam levitatem, et fucò ementitum colorem amet; sanguine et viribus niteat*†."

* "To your expression be attentive; but about your matter be solicitous."

† "A higher spirit ought to animate those who study eloquence. They ought to consult the health and soundness of the whole body, rather than bend their attention to such trifling objects as paring the nails and dressing the hair. Let ornament be manly and chaste, without effeminate gaiety, or artificial colouring; let it shine with the glow of health and strength."

LECTURE XX.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE OF MR. ADDISON, IN No. 411, OF THE SPECTATOR.

I HAVE insisted fully on the subject of language and style, both because it is, in itself, of great importance, and because it is more capable of being ascertained by precise rule, than several other parts of composition. A critical analysis of the style of some good author will tend further to illustrate the subject; as it will suggest observations which I have not had occasion to make, and will show, in the most practical light, the use of those which I have made.

Mr. Addison is the author whom I have chosen for this purpose. The Spectator, of which his papers are the chief ornament, is a book which is in the hands of every one, and which cannot be praised too highly. The good sense, and good writing, the useful morality, and the admirable vein of humour, which abound in it, render it one of those standard books which have done the greatest honour to the English nation. I have formerly given the general character of Mr. Addison's

style and manner, as natural and unaffected, easy and polite, and full of those graces which a flowery imagination diffuses over writing. At the same time, though one of the most beautiful writers in the language, he is not the most correct ; a circumstance which renders his composition the more proper to be the subject of our present criticism. The free and flowing manner of this amiable writer sometimes led him into inaccuracies, which the more studied circumspection and care of far inferior writers have taught them avoid. Remark- ing his beauties, therefore, which I shall have frequent occasion to do as I proceed, I must also point out his negligences and defects. Without a free, impartial discussion of both the faults and beauties which occur in his composition, it is evident this piece of criticism would be of no service ; and, from the freedom which I use in criticising Mr. Addison's style, none can imagine, that I mean to depreciate his writings, after having repeatedly declared the high opinion which I entertain of them. The beauties of this author are so many, and the general character of his style is so elegant and estimable, that the minute imperfections I shall have occasion to point out, are but like those spots in the sun, which may be discovered by the assistance of art, but which have no effect in obscuring its lustre. It is, indeed, my judgment, that what Quintilian applies to Cicero, "*Ille se profecisse sciat, cui Cicero valde placebit,*" may, with justice, be applied to Mr. Addison ; that to be highly pleased with his manner of writing, is the criterion of one's having acquired a good taste in English style. The paper on which we are now to enter, is No. 411, the first of his celebrated essays on the pleasures of the imagination, in the sixth volume of the Spectator. It begins thus ;

“ Our sight is the most perfect, and most delightful of all our senses.”

This is an excellent introductory sentence. It is clear, precise, and simple. The author lays down, in a few plain words, the proposition which he is going to illustrate throughout the rest of the paragraph. In this manner we should always set out. A first sentence should seldom be a long, and never an intricate one.

He might have said, “ Our sight is the most perfect and the most delightful.” But he has judged better, in omitting to repeat the article *the*. For the repetition of it is proper, chiefly when we intend to point out the objects of which we speak, as distinguished from, or contrasted with, each other, and when we want that the reader’s attention should rest on that distinction. For instance ; had Mr. Addison intended to say, That our sight is at once the most *delightful*, and the most *useful*, of all our senses, the article might then have been repeated with propriety, as a clear and strong distinction would have been conveyed. But as between *perfect* and *delightful*, there is less contrast, there was no occasion for such repetition. It would have had no other effect, but to add a word unnecessarily to the sentence. He proceeds :

“ It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance, and continues the longest in action, without being tired or fatiated with its proper enjoyments.”

This sentence deserves attention, as remarkably harmonious, and well constructed. It possesses, indeed, almost all the properties of a perfect sentence. It is entirely perspicuous. It is loaded with no superfluous or unnecessary words. For “ tired or “ fatiated,” towards the end of the sentence, are not used for synonymous terms. They convey dif-

ting ideas, and refer to different members of the period ; that this sense “ continues the longest in action without being tired,” that is, without being fatigued with its action ; and also without being “ satiated with its proper enjoyments.” That quality of a good sentence, which I termed its unity, is here perfectly preserved. It is our sight of which he speaks. This is the object carried through the sentence, and presented to us in every member of it, by those verbs, *fills, converses, continues*, to each of which it is clearly the nominative. Those capital words are disposed of in the most proper places ; and that uniformity is maintained in the construction of the sentence, which suits the unity of the object.

Observe too, the music of the period ; consisting of three members, each of which, agreeably to a rule I formerly mentioned, grows, and rises above the other in sound, till the sentence is conducted, at last, to one of the most melodious closes which our language admits ; “ without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments.” *Enjoyments*, is a word of length and dignity, exceedingly proper for a close which is designed to be a musical one, The harmony is the more happy, as this disposition of the members of the period, which suits the sound so well, is no less just and proper with respect to the sense. It follows the order of nature. First, we have the variety of objects mentioned, which sight furnishes to the mind ; next, we have the action of sight on those objects ; and lastly, we have the time and continuance of its action. No order could be more natural or happy.

This sentence has still another beauty. It is figurative, without being too much so for the subject. A metaphor runs through it. The sense of sight is, in some degree, personified. We are told of its *conversing* with its objects, and of its not being

tired or *satiated* with its *enjoyments* ; all which expressions are plain allusions to the actions and feelings of men. This is that slight sort of personification, which, without any appearance of boldness, and without elevating the fancy much above its ordinary state, renders discourse picturesque, and leads us to conceive the author's meaning more distinctly, by clothing abstract ideas, in some degree with sensible colours. Mr. Addison abounds with this beauty of style beyond most authors ; and the sentence which we have been considering is very expressive of his manner of writing. There is no blemish in it whatever, unless that a strict critic might perhaps object, that the epithet *large*, which he applies to *variety*—*the largest variety of ideas*—is an epithet more commonly applied to extent than to number. It is plain, that he here employed it to avoid the repetition of the word *great*, which occurs immediately afterwards.

“ The sense of feeling can, indeed, give us a notion of extension, shape, and all other ideas that enter at the eye, except colours : but, at the same time, it is very much straitened and confined in its operations, to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular objects.”

This sentence is by no means so happy as the former. It is, indeed, neither clear nor elegant. *Extension* and *shape* can, with no propriety be called ideas ; they are properties of matter. Neither is it accurate, even according to Mr. Locke's philosophy (with which our author seems here to have puzzled himself), to speak of any sense “ giving us a notion of ideas :” our senses give us the ideas themselves. The meaning would have been much more clear, if the author had expressed himself thus : “ The sense of feeling can, indeed, give us the idea of extension, figure, and all the other pro-

“perties of matter, which are perceived by the eye, except colours.”

The latter part of the sentence is still more embarrassed. For what meaning can we make of the sense of feeling being “confined, in its operations, to the number, bulk, and distance, of its particular objects?” Surely, every sense is confined, as much as the sense of feeling, to the number, bulk, and distance of its own objects. Sight and feeling are, in this respect, perfectly on a level; neither of them can extend beyond its own objects. The turn of expression is so inaccurate here, that one would be apt to suspect two words to have been omitted in the printing, which were originally in Mr. Addison’s manuscript; because the insertion of them would render the sense much more intelligible and clear. These two words are, *with regard*—“it is very much straitened, and confined, in its operations, with regard to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular objects.” The meaning then would be, that feeling is more limited than sight, in this respect; that it is confined to a narrower circle, to a smaller number of objects.

The epithet *particular*, applied to *objects*, in the conclusion of the sentence, is redundant, and conveys no meaning whatever. Mr. Addison seems to have used it in place of *peculiar*, as indeed he does often in other passages of his writings. But *particular* and *peculiar*, though they are too often confounded, are words of different import from each other. *Particular* stands opposed to *general*; *peculiar* stands opposed to what is possessed in *common with others*. *Particular* expresses what in the logical style is called *species*; *peculiar*, what is called *differentia*. Its *peculiar objects* would have signified in this place, the objects of the sense of feeling, as distinguished from the objects of any

other sense ; and would have had more meaning than *its particular objects*. Though, in truth, neither the one nor the other epithet was requisite. It was sufficient to have said simply, *its objects*.

“ Our sight seems designed to supply all these
“ defects, and may be considered as a more delicate and diffusive kind of touch, that spreads
“ itself over an infinite multitude of bodies, comprehends the largest figures, and brings into our
“ reach some of the most remote parts of the universe.”

Here again the author's style returns upon us in all its beauty. This is a sentence distinct, graceful, well-arranged, and highly musical. In the latter part of it, it is constructed with three members, which are formed much in the same manner with those of the second sentence, on which I bestowed so much praise. The construction is so similar, that if it had followed immediately after it, we should have been sensible of a faulty monotony. But the interposition of another sentence between them, prevents this effect.

“ It is this sense which furnishes the imagination with its ideas ; so that by the pleasures of
“ the imagination or fancy (which I shall use promiscuously), I here mean such as arise from
“ visible objects, either when we have them actually in our view ; or when we call up their
“ ideas into our minds by paintings, statues, descriptions, or any the like occasion.”

In place of, “ It is this sense which furnishes”—the author might have said more shortly, “ This sense furnishes.” But the mode of expression which he has used, is here more proper. This sort of full and ample assertion, “ *it is this which*,” is fit to be used when a proposition of importance is laid down, to which we seek to call the reader's attention. It is like pointing with the hand at

the object of which we speak. The parenthesis in the middle of the sentence, "which I shall use promiscuously," is not clear. He ought to have said, "terms which I shall use promiscuously;" as the verb *use* relates not to the pleasures of the imagination, but to the terms of fancy and imagination, which he was to employ as synonymous. "Any the like occasion"—to call a painting or a statue *an occasion*, is not a happy expression, nor is it very proper to speak of "calling up ideas by occasions." The common phrase, "any such means," would have been more natural.

"We cannot indeed have a single image in the fancy, that did not make its first entrance through the sight; but we have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those images which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and vision that are most agreeable to the imagination; for, by this faculty, a man in a dungeon is capable of entertaining himself with scenes and landscapes more beautiful, than any that can be found in the whole compass of nature."

It may be of use to remark, that in one member of this sentence there is an inaccuracy in syntax. It is very proper to say, "altering and compounding those images which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and vision." But we can with no propriety say, "retaining them into all the varieties;" and yet, according to the manner in which the words are ranged, this construction is unavoidable. For "retaining, altering, and compounding," are participles, each of which equally refers to, and governs the subsequent noun, "those images;" and that noun again is necessarily connected with the following preposition, *into*. This instance shows the importance of carefully attending to the rules of

grammar and syntax; when so pure a writer as Mr. Addison could, through inadvertence, be guilty of such an error. The construction might easily have been rectified, by disjoining the participle *retaining*, from the other two participles in this way: "We have the power of retaining those images which we have once received; and of altering and compounding them into all the varieties of picture and vision;" or better perhaps thus: "We have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those images which we have once received; and of forming them into all the varieties of picture and vision."—The latter part of the sentence is clear and elegant.

"There are few words in the English language, which are employed in a more loose and uncircumscribed sense, than those of the fancy and the imagination."

"There are few words—which are employed."—It had been better, if our author here had said more simply—"Few words in the English language are employed."—Mr. Addison, whose style is of the free and full, rather than the nervous kind, deals, on all occasions, in this extended sort of phraseology. But it is proper only when some assertion of consequence is advanced, and which can bear an emphasis; such as that in the first sentence of the former paragraph. On other occasions, these little words, *it is*, and *there are*, ought to be avoided as redundant and enfeebling.—

"Those of the fancy and the imagination." The article ought to have been omitted here. As he does not mean the powers of "the fancy and the imagination," but the words only, the article certainly had no proper place; neither, indeed, was there any occasion for other two words, *those of*. Better, if the sentence had run thus: "Few words in the English language are employed

“ in a more loose and uncircumscribed sense, than
 “ fancy and imagination.”

“ I therefore thought it necessary to fix and de-
 “ termine the notion of these two words, as I in-
 “ tend to make use of them in the thread of my
 “ following speculations, that the reader may con-
 “ ceive rightly what is the subject which I proceed
 “ upon.”

Though *fix* and *determine* may appear synony-
 mous words, yet a difference between them may
 be remarked ; and they may be viewed, as ap-
 plied here, with peculiar delicacy. The author
 had just said, that the words, of which he is speak-
 ing, were “ loose and uncircumscribed.” *Fix* re-
 lates to the first of these, *determine* to the last. We
fix what is *loose* ; that is, we confine the word to
 its proper place, that it may not fluctuate in our
 imagination, and pass from one idea to another ;
 and we *determine* what is *uncircumscribed*, that is,
 we ascertain its *termini* or limits, we draw the cir-
 cle round it, that we may see its boundaries. For
 we cannot conceive the meaning of a word, nor
 indeed of any other thing clearly, till we see its
 limits, and know how far it extends. These two
 words, therefore, have grace and beauty, as they
 are here applied ; though a writer, more frugal
 of words than mr. Addison, would have preferred
 the single word *ascertain*, which conveys, without
 any metaphor, the import of them both.

The “ notion of these words,” is somewhat of a
 harsh phrase, at least not so commonly used, as
 the “ meaning of these words.”—“ As I intend to
 “ make use of them in the thread of my specula-
 “ tions ;” this is plainly faulty. A sort of metaphor
 is improperly mixed with words in the literal sense.
 He might very well have said, “ as I intend to make
 “ use of them in my following speculations.”—
 This was plain language ; but if he chose to bor-

row an allusion from *thread*, that allusion ought to have been supported ; for there is no consistency in “making use of them in the thread of speculations ;” and, indeed, in expressing any thing so simple and familiar as this is, plain language is always to be preferred to metaphorical. “The subject which I proceed upon,” is an ungraceful close of a sentence ; better, “the subject upon which I proceed.”

“I must therefore desire him to remember, that by the pleasures of the imagination, I mean only such pleasures as arise originally from sight, and that I divide these pleasures into two kinds.”

As the last sentence began with—“I therefore thought it necessary to fix,” it is careless to begin this sentence in a manner so very similar, “I must therefore desire him to remember ;” especially, as the small variation of using, “on this account,” or, “for this reason,” in place of “therefore,” would have amended the style. When he says—“I mean only such pleasures”—it may be remarked, that the adverb *only* is not in its proper place. It is not intended here to qualify the verb *mean*, but *such pleasures* ; and therefore should have been placed in as close connexion as possible with the word which it limits or qualifies. The style becomes more clear and neat, when the words are arranged thus : “by the pleasures of the imagination, I mean such pleasures only as arise from sight.”

“My design being, first of all, to discourse of those primary pleasures of the imagination, which entirely proceed from such objects as are before our eyes ; and, in the next place, to speak of those secondary pleasures of the imagination, which flow from the ideas of visible objects, when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories,

“ or formed into agreeable visions of things, that
 “ are either absent or fictitious.”

It is a great rule in laying down the division of +
 a subject, to study neatness and brevity as much
 as possible. The divisions are then more distinctly
 apprehended, and more easily remembered. This
 sentence is not perfectly happy in that respect. It is
 somewhat clogged by a tedious phraseology. “ My
 “ design being first of all to discourse—in the next
 “ place to speak of—such objects as are before our
 “ eyes—things that are either absent or fictitious.”
 Several words might have been spared here ; and
 the style made more neat and compact.

“ The pleasures of the imagination, taken in
 “ their full extent, are not so gross as those of
 “ sense, nor so refined as those of the under-
 “ standing.”

This sentence is distinct and elegant.

“ The last are indeed more preferable, because
 “ they are founded on some new knowledge or
 “ improvement in the mind of man : Yet it must
 “ be confessed, that those of the imagination are
 “ as great, and as transporting as the other.”

In the beginning of this sentence, the phrase, *more
 preferable*, is such a plain inaccuracy, that one won-
 ders how Mr. Addison should have fallen into it ;
 seeing *preferable*, of itself, expresses the compara-
 tive degree, and is the same with *more eligible*, or
more excellent.

I must observe farther, that the proposition con-
 tained in the last member of this sentence, is nei-
 ther clear nor neatly expressed—“ it must be con-
 “ fessed, that those of the imagination are as great,
 “ and as transporting as the other.”—In the for-
 mer sentence, he had compared three things toge-
 ther ; the pleasures of the imagination, those of
 sense, and those of the understanding. In the be-
 ginning of this sentence, he had called the pleasures

of the understanding "the last:" and he ends the sentence, with observing, that those of the imagination are as great and transporting "as the other." Now, besides that "the other" makes not a proper contrast with the "last," he leaves it ambiguous, whether, by, "the other," he meant the pleasures of the understanding. or the pleasures of sense; for it may refer to either, by the construction; though, undoubtedly, he intended that it should refer to the pleasures of the understanding only. The proposition, reduced to perspicuous language, runs thus: "Yet it must be confessed, that the pleasures of the imagination, when compared with those of the understanding, are no less great and transporting."

"A beautiful prospect delights the soul as much as a demonstration; and a description in Homer has charmed more readers than a chapter in Aristotle."

This is a good illustration of what he had been asserting, and is expressed with that happy and elegant turn, for which our author is very remarkable.

"Besides, the pleasures of the imagination have this advantage above those of the understanding, that they are more obvious, and more easy to be acquired."

This is also an unexceptionable sentence.

"It is but opening the eye, and the scene enters."

This sentence is lively and picturesque. By the gaiety and briskness which it gives the style, it shows the advantage of intermixing such a short sentence as this, amidst a run of longer ones, which never fails to have a happy effect. I must remark, however, a small inaccuracy. A *scene* cannot be said to enter; an *actor* enters; but a *scene appears*, or *presents itself*.

"The colours paint themselves on the fancy,

“ with very little attention of thought or application of mind in the beholder.”

This is still beautiful illustration, carried on with that agreeable floweriness of fancy and style, which is so well suited to those pleasures of the imagination, of which the author is treating.

“ We are struck, we know not how, with the symmetry of any thing we see, and immediately assent to the beauty of an object, without enquiring into the particular causes and occasions of it.”

There is a falling off here from the elegance of the former sentences. We assent to the truth of a proposition ; but cannot so well be said “ to assent to the beauty of an object.” *Acknowledge* would have expressed the sense with more propriety. The close of the sentence too is heavy and ungraceful—“ the particular causes and occasions of it”—both *particular*, and *occasions*, are words quite superfluous ; and the pronoun *it* is in some measure ambiguous, whether it refers to *beauty* or to *object*. It would have been some amendment to the style, to have run thus : “ We immediately acknowledge the beauty of an object, without enquiring into the cause of that beauty.”

“ A man of a polite imagination is let into a great many pleasures, that the vulgar are not capable of receiving.”

Polite is a term more commonly applied to manners or behaviour, than to the mind or imagination. There is nothing farther to be observed on this sentence, unless the use of *that* for a relative pronoun, instead of *which* ; an usage which is too frequent with Mr. Addison. *Which* is a much more definite word than *that*, being never employed in any other way than as a relative ; whereas *that* is a word of many senses ; sometimes a demonstrative pronoun, often a conjunction. In some cases

we are indeed obliged to use *that* for a relative, in order to avoid the ungraceful repetition of *which* in the same sentence. But when we are laid under no necessity of this kind, *which* is always the preferable word, and certainly was so in this sentence—"Pleasures which the vulgar are not capable of receiving," is much better than "pleasures that the vulgar," &c.

"He can converse with a picture, and find an agreeable companion in a statue. He meets with a secret refreshment in a description; and often feels a greater satisfaction in the prospect of fields and meadows, than another does in the possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of property in every thing he sees; and makes the most rude, uncultivated parts of nature administer to his pleasures: so that he looks upon the world, as it were, in another light, and discovers in it a multitude of charms that conceal themselves from the generality of mankind."

All this is very beautiful. The illustration is happy; and the style runs with the greatest ease and harmony. We see no labour, no stiffness, or affectation; but an author writing from the native flow of a gay and pleasing imagination. This predominant character of Mr. Addison's manner, far more than compensates all those little negligences which we are now remarking. Two of these occur in this paragraph. The first, in the sentence which begins with, "It gives him indeed a kind of property"—To this *it*, there is no proper antecedent in the whole paragraph. In order to gather the meaning, we must look back as far as to the third sentence before the first of the paragraph, which begins with, "A man of a polite imagination." This phrase, *polite imagination*, is the only antecedent to which this *it* can refer; and

even that is an improper antecedent, as it stands in the genitive case, as the qualification only of a man.

The other instance of negligence, is towards the end of the paragraph—"So that he looks upon the world, as it were, in another light."—By *another* light Mr. Addison means, a light different from that in which other men view the world. But though this expression clearly conveyed this meaning to himself when writing, it conveys it *very* indistinctly to others; and is an instance of that sort of inaccuracy, into which, in the warmth of composition, every writer of a lively imagination is apt to fall; and which can only be remedied by a cool, subsequent review. "As it were"—is, upon most occasions, no more than an ungraceful palliative; and here there was not the least occasion for it, as he was not about to say any thing which required a softening of this kind. To say the truth, this last sentence, "so that he looks upon the world," and what follows, had better been wanting altogether. It is no more than an unnecessary recapitulation of what had gone before—a feeble adjection to the lively picture he had given of the pleasures of the imagination. The paragraph would have ended with more spirit at the words immediately preceding; "the uncultivated parts of nature administer to his pleasures."

"There are, indeed, but very few who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a relish of any pleasures that are not criminal; every diversion they take, is at the expense of some one virtue or another, and their very first step out of business is into vice or folly."

Nothing can be more elegant, or more finely turned, than this sentence. It is neat, clear, and musical. We could hardly alter one word, or dis-

arrange one member, without spoiling it. Few sentences are to be found more finished, or more happy.

"A man should endeavour, therefore, to make the sphere of his innocent pleasures as wide as possible, that he may retire into them with safety, and find in them, such a satisfaction as a wise man would not blush to take."

This also is a good sentence, and gives occasion to no material remark.

"Of this nature are those of the imagination, which do not require such a bent of thought as is necessary to our more serious employments, nor, at the same time, suffer the mind to sink into that indolence and remissness, which are apt to accompany our more sensual delights; but, like a gentle exercise to the faculties, awaken them from sloth and idleness, without putting them upon any labour or difficulty."

The beginning of this sentence is not correct, and affords an instance of a period too loosely connected with the preceding one. "Of this nature," says he, "are those of the imagination," We might ask, of what nature? For it had not been the scope of the preceding sentence to describe the nature of any set of pleasures. He had said, that it was every man's duty to make the sphere of his innocent pleasures as wide as possible, in order that, within that sphere, he might find a safe retreat, and a laudable satisfaction. The transition is loosely made, by beginning the next sentence with saying, "Of this nature are those of the imagination." It had been better, if, keeping in view the governing object of the preceding sentence, he had said. "This advantage we gain," or, "This satisfaction we enjoy, by means of the pleasures of imagination." The rest of the sentence is abundantly correct.

“ We might here add, that the pleasures of the
 “ fancy are more conducive to health than those
 “ of the understanding, which are worked out by
 “ dint of thinking, and attended with too violent
 “ a labour of the brain.”

On this sentence nothing occurs deserving of remark, except that “ worked out by dint of thinking,” is a phrase which borders too much on vulgar and colloquial language, to be proper for being employed in a polished composition..

“ Delightful scenes, whether in nature, painting, or poetry, have a kindly influence on the body, as well as the mind, and not only serve to clear and brighten the imagination, but are able to disperse grief and melancholy, and to set the animal spirits in pleasing and agreeable motions. For this reason, sir Francis Bacon, in his essay upon health, has not thought it improper to prescribe to his reader a poem, or a prospect, where he particularly dissuades him from knotty and subtle disquisitions, and advises him to pursue studies that fill the mind with splendid and illustrious objects, as histories, fables, and contemplations of nature.”

In the latter of these two sentences, a member of the period is altogether out of its place ; which gives the whole sentence a harsh and disjointed cast, and serves to illustrate the rules I formerly gave, concerning arrangement. The wrong-placed member which I point at, is this, “ where he particularly dissuades him from knotty and subtle disquisitions ;”—these words should, undoubtedly, have been placed not where they stand, but thus : “ Sir Francis Bacon, in his essay upon health, where he particularly dissuades the reader from knotty and subtle speculations, has not thought it improper to prescribe to him,” &c. This arrangement reduces every thing into proper order.

“ I have, in this paper, by way of introduction,
“ settled the notion of those pleasures of the ima-
“ gination, which are the subject of my present
“ undertaking, and endeavoured, by several con-
“ siderations, to recommend to my readers the
“ pursuit of those pleasures ; I shall, in my next
“ paper, examine the several sources from whence
“ these pleasures are derived.”

These two concluding sentences afford examples of the proper collocation of circumstances in a period. I formerly showed, that it is often a matter of difficulty to dispose of them in such a manner, as that they shall not embarrass the principal subject of the sentence. In the sentences before us, several of these incidental circumstances necessarily come in—“ By way of introduction”—“ by several
“ considerations”—“ in this paper”—“ in the next
“ paper.” All which are, with great propriety, managed by our author. It will be found, upon trial, that there were no other parts of the sentence, in which they could have been placed to equal advantage. Had he said, for instance, “ I have
“ settled the notion (rather, the *meaning*)—of
“ those pleasures of the imagination, which are
“ the subject of my present undertaking, by way
“ of introduction, in this paper, and endeavour-
“ ed to recommend the pursuit of those pleasures
“ to my readers by several considerations ;” we must be sensible, that the sentence, thus clogged with circumstances in the wrong place, would neither have been so neat nor so clear, as it is by the present construction.

LECTURE XXI.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE IN No. 412 OF THE SPECTATOR.

THE observations which have occurred in reviewing that paper of mr. Addison's, which was the subject of the last lecture, sufficiently show, that, in the writings of an author of the most happy genius and distinguished talents, inaccuracies may sometimes be found. Though such inaccuracies may be overbalanced by so many beauties, as render style highly pleasing and agreeable upon the whole, yet it must be desirable to every writer, to avoid, as far as he can, inaccuracy of any kind. As the subject, therefore, is of importance, I have thought it might be useful to carry on this criticism throughout two or three subsequent papers of the Spectator. At the same time I must intimate, that the lectures on these papers are solely intended for such as are applying themselves to the study of English style. I pretend not to give instruction to those who are already well acquainted with the powers of language. To them my remarks may prove unedifying; to some they may seem

tedious and minute ; but to such as have not yet made all the proficiency which they desire in elegance of style, strict attention to the composition and structure of sentences cannot fail to prove of considerable benefit : and though my remarks on mr. Addison should, in any instance, be thought ill-founded, they will, at least, serve the purpose of leading them into the train of making proper remarks for themselves*. I proceed, therefore, to the examination of the subsequent paper, No. 412.

“ I shall first consider those pleasures of the
 “ imagination, which arise from the actual view
 “ and survey of outward objects : and these, I
 “ think, all proceed from the sight of what is great,
 “ uncommon, or beautiful.”

This sentence gives occasion for no material remark. It is simple and distinct. The two words which he here uses, *view* and *survey*, are not altogether synonymous : as the former may be supposed to import mere inspection ; the latter more deliberate examination. Yet they lie so near to one another in meaning, that, in the present case, either of them, perhaps, would have been sufficient. The epithet *actual*, is introduced in order to mark more strongly the distinction between what our

* If there be readers who think any farther apology requisite for my adventuring to criticise the sentences of so eminent an author as mr. Addison, I must take notice, that I was naturally led to it by the circumstances of that part of the kingdom, where these lectures were read ; where the ordinary spoken language often differs much from what is used by good English authors. Hence it occurred to me, as a proper method of correcting any peculiarities of dialect, to direct students of eloquence, to analyze and examine, with particular attention, the structure of mr. Addison's sentences. Those papers of the Spectator, which are the subject of the following lectures, were accordingly given out in exercise to students, to be thus examined and analyzed ; and several of the observations which follow, both on the beauties and blemishes of this author, were suggested, by the observations given to me in consequence of the exercise prescribed.

author calls the primary pleasures of imagination, which arise from immediate view, and the secondary, which arise from remembrance or description.

“ There may, indeed, be something so terrible or offensive, that the horror or loathsomeness of an object, may overbear the pleasure which results from its novelty, greatness, or beauty ; but still there will be such a mixture of delight in the very disgust it gives us, as any of these three qualifications are most conspicuous and prevailing.”

This sentence must be acknowledged to be an unfortunate one. The sense is obscure and embarrassed, and the expression loose and irregular. The beginning of it is perplexed by the wrong position of the words *something* and *object*. The natural arrangement would have been, “ There may, indeed, be something in an object so terrible or offensive, that the horror or loathsomeness of it may overbear.” These two epithets, “ horror or loathsomeness,” are awkwardly joined together. *Loathsomeness* is, indeed, a quality which may be ascribed to an object ; but *horror* is not ; it is a feeling excited in the mind. The language would have been much more correct, had our author said, “ There may, indeed, be something in an object so terrible or offensive, that the horror or disgust which it excites may overbear.” The first two epithets, “ terrible or offensive,” would then have expressed the qualities of an object ; the latter, “ horror or disgust,” the corresponding sentiments which these qualities produce in us. *Loathsomeness* was the most unhappy word he could have chosen : for to be *loathsome*, is to be odious, and seems totally to exclude “ any mixture of delight,” which he afterwards supposes may be found in the object.

In the latter part of the sentence there are se-

veral inaccuracies. When he says, "there will be such a mixture of delight in the very disgust it gives us, as any of these three qualifications are most conspicuous"—the construction is defective, and seems hardly grammatical. He meant assuredly to say, "such a mixture of delight as is proportioned to the degree in which any of these three qualifications are most conspicuous."—We know that there may be a mixture of pleasant and of disagreeable feelings excited by the same object; yet it appears inaccurate to say, that there is any "delight in the very disgust."—The plural verb, *are*, is improperly joined to "any of these three qualifications;" for as *any* is here used distributively, and means "any one of these three qualifications," the corresponding verb ought to have been singular. The order in which the two last words are placed, should have been reversed, and made to stand, "prevailing and conspicuous." They are *conspicuous*, because they *prevail*.

"By greatness, I do not only mean the bulk of any single object, but the largeness of a whole view, considered as one entire piece."

In a former lecture, when treating of the structure of sentences, I quoted this sentence as an instance of the careless manner in which adverbs are sometimes interjected in the midst of a period. Only, as it is here placed, appears to be a limitation of the following verb, *mean*. The question might be put, What more does he than only mean? as the author, undoubtedly, intended it to refer to the "bulk of a single object," it would have been placed with more propriety, after these words: "I do not mean the bulk of any single object only, but the largeness of a whole view." As the following phrase, "considered as one entire piece," seems to be somewhat deficient, both in dignity and

propriety, perhaps this adjection might have been altogether omitted, and the sentence have closed with fully as much advantage at the word *view*.

“ Such are the prospects of an open champaign
 “ country, a vast uncultivated desert, of huge
 “ heaps of mountains, high rocks and precipices,
 “ or a wide expanse of waters, where we are not
 “ struck with the novelty, or beauty of the sight,
 “ but with that rude kind of magnificence which
 “ appears in many of these stupendous works of
 “ nature.”

This sentence, in the main, is beautiful. The objects presented are all of them noble, selected with judgment, arranged with propriety, and accompanied with proper epithets. We must, however, observe, that the sentence is too loosely, and not very grammatically, connected with the preceding one. He says, “ such are the prospects ;” *such*, signifies, of that nature or quality ; which necessarily presupposes some adjective, or word descriptive of a quality, going before, to which it refers. But, in the foregoing sentence, there is no such adjective. He had spoken of *greatness* in the abstract only ; and, therefore, *such* has no distinct antecedent to which we can refer it. The sentence would have been introduced with more grammatical propriety, by saying, “ To this class belong,” or, “ under this head are ranged, the “ prospects,” &c. The *of*, which is prefixed to “ huge heaps of mountains,” is misplaced ; and has, perhaps, been an error in the printing ; as, either all the particulars here enumerated should have had this mark of the genitive, or it should have been prefixed to none but the first. When, in the close of the sentence, the author speaks of that “ rude magnificence which appears in many of these “ stupendous works of nature,” he had better have omitted the word *many*, which seems to ex-

cept some of them. Whereas, in his general proposition, he undoubtedly meant to include all the stupendous works he had enumerated ; and there is no question, that, in all of them, a rude magnificence appears.

“ Our imagination loves to be filled with an object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for its capacity. We are flung into a pleasing astonishment at such unbounded views ; and feel a delightful stillness and amazement in the soul, at the apprehension of them.”

The language here is elegant, and several of the expressions remarkably happy. There is nothing which requires any animadversion except the close, “ at the apprehension of them.” Not only is this a languid, enfeebling conclusion of a sentence, otherwise beautiful, but “ the apprehension of views,” is a phrase destitute of all propriety, and, indeed, scarcely intelligible. Had this adjection been entirely omitted, and the sentence been allowed to close with “ stillness and amazement in the soul,” it would have been a great improvement. Nothing is frequently more hurtful to the grace or vivacity of a period, than superfluous dragging words at the conclusion.

“ The mind of man naturally hates every thing that looks like a restraint upon it, and is apt to fancy itself under a sort of confinement, when the sight is pent up in a narrow compass, and shortened on every side by the neighbourhood of walls or mountains. On the contrary, a spacious horizon is an image of liberty, where the eye has room to range abroad, to expatiate at large on the immensity of its views, and to lose itself amidst the variety of objects that offer themselves to its observation. Such wide and undetermined prospects are as pleasing to the

“fancy, as the speculations of eternity, or infinitude, are to the understanding.”

Our author's style appears, here, in all that native beauty which cannot be too much praised. The members flow smoothly, and with a graceful harmony. The words which he has chosen, carry a certain amplitude and fullness, well suited to the nature of the subject; and the members of the periods rise in a gradation, accommodated to the rise of the thought. The eye first “ranges abroad;” then “expatiates at large on the immensity of its views;” and at last, “loses itself amidst the variety of objects that offer themselves to its observation.” The “fancy” is elegantly contrasted with the “understanding;” “prospects” with “speculations;” and “wide and undetermined prospects” with “speculations of eternity and infinitude.”

“But if there be a beauty or uncommonness joined with this grandeur, as in a troubled ocean, a heaven adorned with stars and meteors, or a spacious landscape cut out into rivers, woods, rocks and meadows, the pleasure still grows upon us, as it arises from more than a single principle.”

The article prefixed to *beauty* in the beginning of this sentence, might have been omitted, and the style have run, perhaps, to more advantage thus: “But if beauty, or uncommonness, be joined to this grandeur.” “A landscape cut out into rivers, woods,” &c. seems unreasonably to imply an artificial formation; and would have been better expressed by, “diversified with rivers, woods,” &c.

“Every thing that is new or uncommon, raises a pleasure in the imagination, because it fills the soul with an agreeable surprise, gratifies its curiosity, and gives it an idea of which it was not before possessed. We are, indeed, so often

“ conversant with one set of objects, and tired
 “ out with so many repeated shows of the same
 “ things, that whatever is new or uncommon
 “ contributes a little to vary human life, and to
 “ divert our minds, for a while, with the strange-
 “ ness of its appearance. It serves us for a kind
 “ of refreshment, and takes off from that satiety
 “ we are apt to complain of, in our usual and ordi-
 “ nary entertainments.”

The style in these sentences flows in an easy and agreeable manner. A severe critic might point out some expressions that would bear being retrenched. But this would alter the genius and character of Mr. Addison's style. We must always remember, that good composition admits of being carried on under many different forms. Style must not be reduced to one precise standard. One writer may be as agreeable, by a pleasing diffuseness, when the subject bears, and his genius prompts it, as another by a concise and forcible manner. It is fit, however, to observe, that, in the beginning of those sentences which we have at present before us, the phrase, “ raises a pleasure in the imagination,” is unquestionably too flat and feeble, and might easily be amended, by saying, “ affords pleasure to “ the imagination ;” and towards the end, there are two *of's* which grate harshly on the ear, in that phrase, “ takes off from that satiety we are “ apt to complain of ;” where the correction is as easily made as in the other case, by substituting, “ diminishes that satiety of which we are apt to “ complain.” Such instances show the advantage of frequent reviews of what we have written, in order to give proper correctness and polish to our language.

“ It is this which bestows charms on a monster,
 “ and makes even the imperfections of nature
 “ please us. It is this that recommends variety,

“ where the mind is every instant called off to
 “ something new, and the attention not suffered to
 “ dwell too long, and waste itself, on any parti-
 “ cular object. It is this, likewise, that improves
 “ what is great or beautiful, and makes it afford
 “ the mind a double entertainment.”

Still the style proceeds with perspicuity, grace, and harmony. The full and ample assertion, with which each of these sentences is introduced, frequent, on many occasions, with our author, is here proper and seasonable ; as it was his intention to magnify, as much as possible, the effects of novelty and variety, and to draw our attention to them. His frequent use of *that*, instead of which, is another peculiarity of his style ; but, on this occasion in particular, cannot be much commended, as, “ it is this which,” seems, in every view, to be better than, “ it is this that,” three times repeated. I must, likewise, take notice, that the antecedent to, “ it is this,” when critically considered, is not altogether proper. It refers, as we discover by the sense, to “ whatever is new or uncommon.” But as it is not good language to say, “ whatever is new bestows charms on a monster,” one cannot avoid thinking that our author had done better to have begun the first of these three sentences, with saying, “ It is novelty which bestows charms on a monster,” &c.

“ Groves, fields, and meadows, are, at any season of the year pleasant to look upon ; but never so much as in the opening of the spring, when they are all new and fresh, with their first gloss upon them, and not yet too much accustomed and familiar to the eye.”

In this expression, “ never so much as in the opening of the spring,” there appears to be a small error in grammar ; for when the construction is filled up, it must be read, “ never so much

“pleasant.” Had he, to avoid this, said, “never so much so,” the grammatical error would have been prevented, but the language would have been awkward. Better to have said, “but never so agreeable as in the opening of the spring.” We readily say, the eye is accustomed to objects; but to say, as our author has done at the close of the sentence, that objects are “accustomed to the eye,” can scarcely be allowed in a prose composition.

“For this reason, there is nothing that more enlivens a prospect than rivers, jetteaus, or falls of water, where the scene is perpetually shifting, and entertaining the sight, every moment, with something that is new. We are quickly tired with looking at hills and vallies, where every thing continues fixed and settled in the same place and posture; but find our thoughts a little agitated and relieved at the sight of such objects as are ever in motion, and sliding away from beneath the eye of the beholder.”

The first of these sentences is connected in too loose a manner with that which immediately preceded it. When he says, “For this reason, there is no thing that more enlivens,” &c. we are entitled to look for the *reason* in what he had just before said. But there we find no *reason* for what he is now going to assert, except that groves and meadows are most pleasant in the spring. We know that he has been speaking of the pleasure produced by novelty and variety; and our minds naturally recur to this, as the reason here alluded to; but his language does not properly express it. It is, indeed, one of the defects of this amiable writer, that his sentences are often too negligently connected with one another. His meaning, upon the whole, we gather with ease from the tenor of

his discourse. Yet this negligence prevents his sense from striking us with that force and evidence, which a more accurate juncture of parts would have produced. Bating this inaccuracy, these two sentences, especially the latter, are remarkably elegant and beautiful. The close, in particular, is uncommonly fine, and carries as much expressive harmony as the language can admit. It seems to paint what he is describing, at once to the eye and the ear.—“Such objects as are ever in motion, “and sliding away from beneath the eye of the “beholder.”—Indeed, notwithstanding those small errors which the strictness of critical examination obliges me to point out, it may be safely pronounced, that the two paragraphs which we have now considered in this paper, the one concerning greatness, and the other concerning novelty, are extremely worthy of Mr. Addison, and exhibit a style, which they who can successfully imitate, may esteem themselves happy.

“But there is nothing that makes its way more “directly to the soul, than beauty, which immediately diffuses a secret satisfaction and complacency through the imagination, and gives a “finishing to any thing that is great or uncommon. The very first discovery of it strikes the “mind with an inward joy, and spreads a cheerfulness and delight through all its faculties.”

Some degree of verbosity may be here discovered, as phrases are repeated which seem little more than the echo of one another; such as “diffusing satisfaction and complacency through the “imagination—striking the mind with inward joy “—spreading cheerfulness and delight through all “its faculties.” At the same time, I readily admit that this full and flowing style, even though it carry some redundancy, is not unsuitable to the gaiety of the subject on which the author is enter-

ing, and is more allowable here, than it would have been on some other occasions.

“ There is not, perhaps, any real beauty or deformity more in one piece of matter than another ; because we might have been so made, that whatever now appears loathsome to us, might have shown itself agreeable ; but we find, by experience, that there are several modifications of matter, which the mind, without any previous consideration, pronounces at first sight beautiful or deformed.”

In this sentence there is nothing remarkable, in any view, to draw our attention. We may observe only, that the word *more*, towards the beginning, is not in its proper place, and that the preposition *in* is wanting before *another*. The phrase ought to have stood thus—“ Beauty or deformity in one piece of matter, more than in another.”

“ Thus we see, that every different species of sensible creatures has its different notions of beauty, and that each of them is most affected with the beauties of its own kind. This is nowhere more remarkable, than in birds of the same shape and proportion, when we often see the male determined in his courtship by the single grain or tincture of a feather, and never discovering any charms but in the colour of its species.”

Neither is there here any particular elegance or felicity of language.—“ Different sense of beauty” would have been a more proper expression to have been applied to irrational creatures, than as it stands, “ different notions of beauty.” In the close of the second sentence, when the author says, “ colour of its species,” he is guilty of a considerable inaccuracy in changing the gender, as he had said in the same sentence, that the “ male was determined in his courtship.”

“ There is a second beauty, that we find in the
 “ several products of art and nature, which does
 “ not work in the imagination with that warmth
 “ and violence, as the beauty that appears in our
 “ proper species, but is apt, however, to raise in
 “ us a secret delight, and a kind of fondness for
 “ the places or objects in which we discover it.”

Still, I am sorry to say, we find little to praise.
 As in his enunciation of the subject, when begin-
 ning the former paragraph, he appeared to have
 been treating of beauty in general, in distinction
 from greatness or novelty ; this “ second kind of
 “ beauty,” of which he here speaks, comes upon
 us in a sort of surprise ; and it is only by degrees
 we learn, that formerly he had no more in view
 than the beauty which the different species of sen-
 sible creatures find in one another. This “ second
 “ kind of beauty,” he says, “ we find in the se-
 “ veral products of art and nature.” He undoubt-
 edly means, not in all, but “ in several of the
 “ products of art and nature ;” and ought so to
 have expressed himself ; and in the place of *pro-
 ducts*, to have used also the more proper word,
productions. When he adds, that this kind of beau-
 ty “ does not work in the imagination with that
 “ warmth and violence as the beauty that appears
 “ in our proper species ;” the language would
 certainly have been more pure and elegant, if he
 had said, that it “ does not work upon the imagi-
 “ nation with such warmth and violence, as the
 “ beauty that appears in our own species.”

“ This consists either in the gaiety or variety of
 “ colours, in the symmetry and proportion of
 “ parts, in the arrangement and disposition of bo-
 “ dies, or in a just mixture and concurrence of
 “ all together. Among these several kinds of beau-
 “ ty, the eye takes most delight in colours.”

To the language here, I see no objection that can be made.

"We no where meet with a more glorious
 "or pleasing show in nature, than what appears
 "in the heavens at the rising and setting of the
 "sun, which is wholly made up of those different
 "stains of light, that show themselves in clouds
 "of a different situation."

The chief ground of criticism on this sentence, is the disjointed situation of the relative *which*. Grammatically, it refers to "the rising and setting of the sun." But the author meant, that it should refer to "the show" which appears in the heavens at that time. It is too common among authors, when they are writing without much care, to make such particles as *this*, and *which*, refer not to any particular antecedent word, but to the tenor of some phrase, or perhaps the scope of some whole sentence, which has gone before. This practice saves them trouble in marshalling their words, and arranging a period : but, though it may leave their meaning intelligible, yet it renders that meaning much less perspicuous, determined, and precise, than it might otherwise have been. The error I have pointed out, might have been avoided by a small alteration in the construction of the sentence, after some such manner as this : "We no
 "where meet with a more glorious and pleasing
 "show in nature, than what is formed in the
 "heavens at the rising and setting of the sun, by
 "the different stains of light which show them-
 "selves in clouds of different situations." Our author writes, "in clouds of a different situation," by which he means, clouds that differ in situation from each other. But as this is neither the obvious nor grammatical meaning of his words, it was necessary to change the expression, as I have done, into the plural number.

“ For this reason, we find the poets, who are
 “ always addressing themselves to the imagina-
 “ tion, borrowing more of their epithets from
 “ colours than from any other topic.”

On this sentence nothing occurs, except a remark similar to what was made before, of loose connexion with the sentence which precedes. For, though he begins with saying, “ For this reason,” the foregoing sentence, which was employed about the clouds and the sun, gives no reason for the general proposition he now lays down. The *reason* to which he refers, was given two sentences before, when he observed, that the eye takes more delight in colours than in any other beauty; and it was with that sentence that the present one should have stood immediately connected.

“ As the fancy delights in every thing that is
 “ great, strange, or beautiful, and is still more
 “ pleased, the more it finds of these perfections
 “ in the same object, so it is capable of receiving
 “ a new satisfaction by the assistance of another
 “ sense.”

“ Another sense” here, means grammatically,
 “ another sense than fancy.” For there is no other thing in the period to which this expression,
 “ another sense,” can at all be opposed. He had not for some time made mention of any *sense* whatever. He forgot to add, what was undoubtedly in his thoughts, “ another sense than that of
 “ sight.”

“ Thus any continued sound, as the music of
 “ birds, or a fall of water, awakens every mo-
 “ ment the mind of the beholder, and makes him
 “ more attentive to the several beauties of the
 “ place which lie before him. Thus, if there arises
 “ a fragrantcy of smells or perfumes, they height-
 “ en the pleasures of the imagination, and make
 “ even the colours and verdure of the landscape

“ appear more agreeable ; for the ideas of both
“ senses recommend each other, and are pleas-
“ anter together, than when they enter the mind
“ separately ; as the different colours of a pic-
“ ture, when they are well-disposed, set off one
“ another, and receive an additional beauty from
“ the advantage of their situation.”

Whether Mr. Addison's theory here be just or not, may be questioned. A continued sound, such as that of a fall of water, is so far from “ awak-
“ ening, every moment, the mind of the beholder,” that nothing is more likely to lull him asleep. It may, indeed, please the imagination, and heighten the beauties of the scene ; but it produces this effect, by a soothing, not by an awakening influence. With regard to the style, nothing appears exceptionable. The flow, both of language and of ideas, is very agreeable. The author continues, to the end, the same pleasing train of thought, which had run through the rest of the paper ; and leaves us agreeably employed in comparing together different degrees of beauty.

LECTURE XXII.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE IN No. 413 OF THE SPECTATOR.

“ **T**HOUGH in yesterday’s paper we consider-
“ ed how every thing that is great, new,
“ or beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination
“ with pleasure ; we must own, that it is impossi-
“ ble for us to assign the necessary cause of this
“ pleasure ; because we know neither the nature
“ of an idea, nor the substance of a human soul,
“ which might help us to discover the conform-
“ ity or disagreeableness of the one to the
“ other ; and, therefore, for want of such a light,
“ all that we can do, in speculations of this kind,
“ is, to reflect on those operations of the soul
“ that are most agreeable, and to range, under
“ their proper heads, what is pleasing or displea-
“ sing to the mind, without being able to trace
“ out the several necessary and efficient causes
“ from whence the pleasure or displeasure arises.”

This sentence, considered as an introductory one, must be acknowledged to be very faulty. An introductory sentence should never contain any

thing that can in any degree fatigue or puzzle the reader. When an author is entering on a new branch of his subject, informing us of what he has done, and what he purposes farther to do, we naturally expect that he should express himself in the simplest and most perspicuous manner possible. But the sentence now before us is crowded and indistinct; containing three separate propositions, which, as I shall afterwards show, required separate sentences to unfold them. Mr. Addison's chief excellence, as a writer, lay in describing and painting. There he is great; but in methodising and reasoning, he is not so eminent. As, besides the general fault of prolixity and indistinctness, this sentence contains several inaccuracies, I shall be obliged to enter into a minute discussion of its structure and parts; a discussion, which to many readers will appear tedious, and which therefore they will naturally pass over; but which, to those who are studying composition, I hope may prove of some benefit.

“ Though in yesterday's paper we considered”—The import of *though*, is, *notwithstanding that*. When it appears in the beginning of a sentence, its relative generally is *yet*: and it is employed to warn us, after we have been informed of some truth, that we are not to infer from it some other thing which we might perhaps have expected to follow: as, “ Though virtue be the only road to happiness, yet it does not permit the unlimited gratification of our desires.” Now it is plain, that there was no such opposition between the subject of yesterday's paper, and what the author is now going to say, between his asserting a fact, and his not being able to assign the cause of the fact, as rendered the use of this adversative particle, *though*, either necessary or proper in the introduction.—“ We considered how every thing t

"is great, new, or beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination with pleasure."—The adverb *how* signifies, either the means by which, or the manner in which, something is done. But, in truth, neither one nor other of these had been considered by our author. He had illustrated the fact alone, that they do affect the imagination with pleasure; and, with respect to the *quomodo*, or the *how*, he is so far from having considered it, that he is just now going to show that it cannot be explained, and that we must rest contented with the knowledge of the fact alone, and of its purpose or final cause.—"We must own, that it is impossible for us to assign the necessary cause" (he means, what is more commonly called the *efficient cause*) "of this pleasure, because we know neither the nature of an idea, nor the substance of a human soul."—"The substance of a human soul" is certainly a very uncouth expression, and there appears no reason why he should have varied from the word *nature*, which would have been equally applicable to *idea* and to *soul*.

"Which might help us," our author proceeds, "to discover the conformity or disagreeableness of the one to the other." The *which*, at the beginning of this member of the period, is surely ungrammatical, as it is a relative, without any antecedent in all the sentence. It refers, by the construction, to "the nature of an idea, or the substance of a human soul;" but this is by no means the reference which the author intended. His meaning is, that our knowing the nature of an idea, and the substance of a human soul, might help us to discover the conformity or disagreeableness of the one to the other: and therefore the syntax absolutely required the word *knowledge* to have been inserted as the antecedent to *which*. I have before remarked, and the remark deserves to

be repeated, that nothing is a more certain sign of careless composition than to make such relatives as *which*, not refer to any precise expression, but carry a loose and vague relation to the general strain of what had gone before. When our sentences run into this form, we may be assured there is something in the construction of them that requires alteration. The phrase of discovering "the conformity or disagreeableness of the one to the other," is likewise exceptionable; for *disagreeableness* neither forms a proper contrast to the other word, *conformity*, nor expresses what the author meant here (as far as any meaning can be gathered from his words), that is, a certain unsuitableness or want of conformity to the nature of the soul. To say the truth, this member of the sentence had much better have been omitted altogether. "The conformity or disagreeableness of an idea to the substance of a human soul," is a phrase which conveys to the mind no distinct nor intelligible conception whatever. The author had before given a sufficient reason for his not assigning the efficient cause of those pleasures of the imagination, because we neither know the nature of our own ideas nor of the soul: and this farther discussion about the conformity or disagreeableness of the nature of the one, to the substance of the other, affords no clear or useful illustration.

"And therefore," the sentence goes on, "for want of such a light, all that we can do in speculations of this kind, is to reflect on those operations of the soul that are most agreeable, and to range under their proper heads what is pleasing or displeasing to the mind."—The two expressions in the beginning of this member, "therefore," and "for the want of such a light," evidently refer to the same thing, and are quite synonymous. One or other of them, therefore,

had better have been omitted. Instead of "to range under their proper heads," the language would have been smoother, if *their* had been left out. "Without being able to trace out the several necessary and efficient causes from whence the pleasure or displeasure arises." The expression, "from whence," though seemingly justified by very frequent usage, is taxed by Dr. Johnson as a vicious mode of speech; seeing *whence* alone, has all the power of *from whence*, which therefore appears an unnecessary reduplication. I am inclined to think, that the whole of this last member of the sentence had better have been dropped. The period might have closed with full propriety, at the words, "pleasing or displeasing to the mind." All that follows suggests no idea that had not been fully conveyed in the preceding part of the sentence. It is a mere expletive adjunction, which might be omitted, not only without injury to the meaning, but to the great relief of a sentence already labouring under the multitude of words.

Having now finished the analysis of this long sentence, I am inclined to be of opinion, that if, on any occasion, we can adventure to alter Mr. Addison's style, it may be done to advantage here, by breaking down this period in the following manner: "In yesterday's paper, we have shown that every thing which is great, new, or beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination with pleasure. We must own, that it is impossible for us to assign the efficient cause of this pleasure, because we know not the nature either of an idea, or of the human soul. All that we can do, therefore, in speculations of this kind, is to reflect on the operations of the soul, which are most agreeable; and to range under proper heads, what is pleasing or displeasing to the mind."—We pro-

ceed now to the examination of the following sentences.

“ Final causes lie more bare and open to our observation, as there are often a great variety that belong to the same effect : and these, though they are not altogether so satisfactory, are generally more useful than the other, as they give us greater occasion of admiring the goodness and wisdom of the first contriver.”

Though some difference might be traced between the sense of *bare* and *open*, yet as they are here employed, they are so nearly synonymous, that one of them was sufficient. It would have been enough to have said, “ Final causes lie more open to observation.”—One can scarcely help observing here, that the obviousness of final causes does not proceed, as Mr. Addison supposes, from a variety of them concurring in the same effect, which is often not the case ; but from our being able to ascertain more clearly, from our own experience, the congruity of a final cause with the circumstances of our condition ; whereas the constituent parts of subjects, whence efficient causes proceed, lie for the most part beyond the reach of our faculties. But as this remark respects the thought, more than the style, it is sufficient for us to observe, that when he says, “ a great variety that belong to the same effect,” the expression, strictly considered, is not altogether proper. The accessory is properly said to belong to the principal ; not the principal to the accessory. Now an effect is considered as the accessory or consequence of its cause ; and therefore, though we might well say, a variety of effects belong to the same cause, it seems not so proper to say, that a variety of causes belong to the same effect.

“ One of the final causes of our delight in any thing that is great, may be this : the Supreme

" Author of our being has so formed the soul of
 " man, that nothing but himself can be its last,
 " adequate, and proper happiness. Because, there-
 " fore, a great part of our happiness must arise
 " from the contemplation of his being, that he
 " might give our souls a just relish of such a con-
 " templation, he has made them naturally delight
 " in the apprehension of what is great or unli-
 " mited."

The concurrence of two conjunctions, *because*,
therefore, forms rather a harsh and unpleasing be-
 ginning of the last of these sentences ; and, in the
 close, one would think, that the author might have
 devised a happier word than *apprehension* to be ap-
 plied to what is *unlimited*. But that I may not be
 thought hypercritical, I shall make no farther ob-
 servations on these sentences.

" Our admiration, which is a very pleasing
 " emotion of the mind, immediately rises at the
 " consideration of any object that takes up a good
 " deal of room in the fancy, and, by consequence,
 " will improve into the highest pitch of astonish-
 " ment and devotion, when we contemplate his na-
 " ture, that is neither circumscribed by time nor
 " place, nor to be comprehended by the largest
 " capacity of a created being."

Here, our author's style rises beautifully along
 with the thought. However inaccurate he may
 sometimes be, when coolly philosophising, yet,
 whenever his fancy is awakened by description, or
 his mind, as here, warmed with some glowing sen-
 timent, he presently becomes great, and discovers;
 in his language, the hand of a master. Every one
 must observe with what felicity this period is
 constructed. The words are long and majestic.
 The members rise one above another, and conduct
 the sentence, at last, to that full and harmonious
 close, which leaves upon the mind such an im-

pression as the author intended to leave, of something uncommonly great, awful, and magnificent.

“ He has annexed a secret pleasure to the idea
 “ of any thing that is new or uncommon, that he
 “ might encourage us in the pursuit of know-
 “ ledge, and engage us to search into the wonders
 “ of creation ; for every new idea brings such a
 “ pleasure along with it, as rewards the pains we
 “ have taken in its acquisition, and, consequently,
 “ serves as a motive to put us upon fresh dis-
 “ coveries.”

The language, in this sentence, is clear and precise : only, we cannot but observe, in this, and the two following sentences, which are constructed in the same manner, a strong proof of Mr. Addison's unreasonable partiality to the particle *that*, in preference to *which*—“ annexed a secret pleasure to
 “ the idea of any thing that is new or uncommon,
 “ that he might encourage us.” Here the first *that*, stands for a relative pronoun, and the next *that*, at the distance only of four words, is a conjunction. This confusion of sounds serves to embarrass style. Much better, sure, to have said,
 “ the idea of any thing which is new or uncommon,
 “ that he might encourage.”—The expression with which the sentence concludes—“ a motive to put us upon fresh discoveries”—is flat, and, in some degree, improper. He should have said, “ put us upon making fresh discoveries”—or rather, “ serves as a motive inciting us to make
 “ fresh discoveries.”

“ He has made every thing that is beautiful in
 “ our own species, pleasant, that all creatures might
 “ be tempted to multiply their kind, and fill the
 “ world with inhabitants ; for, 'tis very remarkable
 “ that wherever nature is crost in the pro-
 “ duction of a monster (the result of any unna-

“ tural mixture), the breed is incapable of propagating its likeness, and of founding a new order of creatures; so that, unless all animals were allured by the beauty of their own species, generation would be at an end, and the earth unpeopled.”

Here we must, however reluctantly, return to censure: for this is among the worst sentences our author ever wrote; and contains a variety of blemishes. Taken as a whole, it is extremely deficient in unity. Instead of a complete proposition, it contains a sort of chain of reasoning, the links of which are so ill put together, that it is with difficulty we can trace the connexion; and, unless we take the trouble of perusing it several times, it will leave nothing on the mind but an indistinct and obscure impression.

Besides this genenal fault, respecting the meaning, it contains some great inaccuracies in language. First, God's having made every thing which “ is beautiful in our own species” (that is, in the human species) *pleasant*, is certainly no motive for *all creatures*, for beasts, and birds, and fishes, to “ multiply their kind.” What the author meant to say, though he has expressed himself in so erroneous a manner, undoubtedly was, “ In all the different orders of creatures, he has made every thing which is beautiful in their own species pleasant, that all creatures might be tempted to multiply their kind.” The second member of the sentence is still worse. “ For, it is very remarkable, that wherever nature is crost in the production of a monster,” &c. The reason which he here gives, for the preceding assertion, intimated by the causal particle *for*, is far from being obvious. The connexion of thought is not readily apparent, and would have required an intermediate step, to render it distinct. But, what does he mean, by “ na-

“ture being crost in the production of a monster?” &c. One might understand him to mean, “disappointed in its intention of producing a monster;” as, when we say, one is crost in his pursuits, we mean that he is disappointed in accomplishing the end which he intended. Had he said, “crost by the production of a monster,” the sense would have been more intelligible. But the proper rectification of the expression would be to insert the adverb *as*, before the preposition *in*, after this manner—“wherever nature is crost, as in the production of a monster;”—the insertion of the particle *as*, throws so much light on the construction of this member of the sentence, that I am very much inclined to believe, it had stood thus, originally, in our author’s manuscript; and that the present reading is a typographical error, which, having crept into the first edition of the Spectator, ran through all the subsequent ones.

“In the last place, he has made every thing that is beautiful, in all other objects, pleasant, or rather has made so many objects appear beautiful, that he might render the whole creation more gay and delightful. He has given almost every thing about us the power of raising an agreeable idea in the imagination; so that it is impossible for us to behold his works with coldness or indifference, and to survey so many beauties without a secret satisfaction and complacency.”

The idea, here, is so just, and the language so clear, flowing, and agreeable, that, to remark any diffuseness which may be attributed to these sentences, would be justly esteemed hypercritical.

“Things would make but a poor appearance to the eye, if we saw them only in their proper figures and motions: and what reason can we assign for their exciting in us, many of

“ those ideas which are different from any thing
 “ that exists in the objects themselves (for such
 “ are light and colours), were it not to add super-
 “ numerous ornaments to the universe, and
 “ make it more agreeable to the imagination?”

Our author is now entering on a theory, which he is about to illustrate, if not with much philosophical accuracy, yet, with great beauty of fancy, and glow of expression. A strong instance of his want of accuracy, appears in the manner in which he opens the subject. For what meaning is there in things “ exciting in us many of those ideas which
 “ are different from any thing that exists in the
 “ objects?” No one, sure, ever imagined, that our ideas exist in the objects. Ideas, it is agreed on all hands, can exist no where but in the mind. What Mr. Locke’s philosophy teaches, and what our author should have said, is, “ exciting in us
 “ many ideas of qualities which are different from
 “ any thing that exists in the objects.” The ungraceful parenthesis which follows, “ for such are
 “ light and colours,” had far better have been avoided, and incorporated with the rest of the sentence, in this manner:—“ exciting in us many
 “ ideas of qualities, such as light and colours,
 “ which are different from any thing that exists in
 “ the objects.”

“ We are every where entertained with pleasing shows, and apparitions. We discover imaginary glories in the heavens, and in the earth; and see some of this visionary beauty poured out upon the whole creation; but what a rough, unsightly sketch of nature should we be entertained with, did all her colouring disappear, and the several distinctions of light and shade vanish? In short, our souls are delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing delusion; and we walk about like the enchanted hero of a ro-

“mance, who sees beautiful castles, woods, and
 “meadows ; and, at the same time hears the war-
 “bling of birds, and the purling of streams ; but,
 “upon the finishing of some secret spell, the fan-
 “tastic scene breaks up, and the disconsolate
 “knight finds himself on a barren heath, or in a
 “solitary desert.”

After having been obliged to point out several inaccuracies, I return with much more pleasure to the display of beauties, for which we have now full scope ; for these two sentences are such as do the highest honour to Mr. Addison's talents as a writer. Warmed with the idea he had laid hold of, his delicate sensibility to the beauty of nature, is finely displayed in the illustration of it. The style is flowing and full, without being too diffuse. It is flowery, but not gaudy ; elevated, but not ostentatious.

Amidst this blaze of beauties, it is necessary for us to remark one or two inaccuracies. When it is said, towards the close of the first of those sentences, “what a rough, unsightly sketch of nature should we be entertained with,” the proposition *with*, should have been placed at the beginning, rather than at the end of this member ; and the word *entertained*, is both improperly applied here, and carelessly repeated from the former part of the sentence. It was there employed according to its more common use, as relating to agreeable objects. “We are every where entertained with pleasing shows.” Here it would have been more proper to have changed the phrase, and said, “with what a rough, unsightly sketch of nature should we be presented.”—At the close of the second sentence, where it is said, “the fantastic scene breaks up,” the expression is lively, but not altogether justifiable. An assembly *breaks up* ; a scene *closes* or *disappears*.

Excepting these two slight inaccuracies, the style, here, is not only correct, but perfectly elegant. The most striking beauty of the passage arises from the happy simile which the author employs, and the fine illustration which it gives to the thought. The *enchanted hero*, the *beautiful castles*, the *fantastic scene*, the *secret spell*, the *disconsolate knight*, are terms chosen with the utmost felicity, and strongly recal all those romantic ideas with which he intended to amuse our imagination. Few authors are more successful in their imagery than Mr. Addison; and few passages in his works, or in those of any author, are more beautiful and picturesque, than that on which we have been commenting.

“ It is not improbable, that something like this
 “ may be the state of the soul after its first separation,
 “ tion, in respect of the images it will receive
 “ from matter; though, indeed, the ideas of colours
 “ are so pleasing and beautiful in the imagination,
 “ that it is possible the soul will not be deprived
 “ of them, but, perhaps, find them excited
 “ by some other occasional cause, as they are, at
 “ present, by the different impressions of the
 “ tile matter on the organ of the sight.”

As all human things, after having attained the summit, begin to decline, we must acknowledge, that, in this sentence, there is a sensible falling off from the beauty of what went before. It is broken and deficient in unity. Its parts are not sufficiently compacted. It contains, besides, some faulty expressions. When it is said, “ something like this
 “ may be the state of the soul,” to the pronoun *this* there is no determined antecedent; it refers to the general import of the preceding description, which, as I have several times remarked, always renders style clumsy and inelegant, if not obscure—
 “ the state of the soul after its first separation,” appears to be an incomplete phrase; and *first*, seems

an useless, and even an improper word. More distinct if he had said—"state of the soul immediately on its separation from the body." The adverb *perhaps*, is redundant, after having just before said, "it is possible."

"I have here supposed, that my reader is acquainted with that great modern discovery, which is, at present, universally acknowledged by all the enquirers into natural philosophy; namely, that light and colours, as apprehended by the imagination, are only ideas in the mind, and not qualities that have any existence in matter. As this is a truth which has been proved incontestibly by many modern philosophers, and is, indeed, one of the finest speculations in that science, if the English reader would see the notion explained at large, he may find it in the eighth chapter of the second book of Mr. Locke's essay on the human understanding."

In these two concluding sentences, the author, hastening to finish, appears to write rather carelessly. In the first of them, a manifest tautology occurs, when he speaks of what is "universally acknowledged by all enquirers." In the second, when he calls "a truth which has been incontestibly proved;" first, a *speculation*, and afterwards a *notion*, the language surely is not very accurate. When he adds, "one of the finest speculations in that science," it does not, at first, appear what science he means. One would imagine, he meant to refer to modern philosophers; for natural philosophy (to which, doubtless, he refers) stands at much too great a distance to be the proper or obvious antecedent to the pronoun *that*. The circumstance, towards the close, "if the English reader would see the notion explained at large, he may find it," is properly taken notice of by the author of the Elements of Criticism, as wrong

arranged; and is rectified thus: "the English reader, if he would see the notion explained at large, may find it," &c.

In concluding the examination of this paper, we may observe, that, though not a very long one, it exhibits a striking view both of the beauties, and the defects, of mr. Addison's style. It contains some of the best, and some of the worst sentences that are to be found in his works. But, upon the whole, it is an agreeable and elegant essay.

LECTURE XXIII.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE IN No. 414 OF THE SPECTATOR.

“IF we consider the works of nature and art,
“ as they are qualified to entertain the imagination, we shall find the last very defective in
“ comparison of the former ; for though they
“ may sometimes appear as beautiful or strange,
“ they can have nothing in them of that vastness and immensity which afford so great an entertainment to the mind of the beholder.”

I had occasion formerly to observe, that an introductory sentence should always be short and simple, and contain no more matter than is necessary for opening the subject. This sentence leads to a repetition of this observation, as it contains both an assertion, and the proof of that assertion ; two things, which, for the most part, but especially at first setting out, are with more advantage kept separate. It would certainly have been better if this sentence had contained only the assertion, ending with the word *former* ; and if a new one had then begun, entering on the proofs of nature's

superiority over art, which is the subject continued to the end of the paragraph. The proper division of the period I shall point out, after having first made a few observations which occur on different parts of it.

“ If we consider the works.” Perhaps it might have been preferable, if our author had begun with saying, “ When we consider the works.” Discourse ought always to begin, when it is possible, with a clear proposition. The *if*, which is here employed, converts the sentence into a supposition, which is always in some degree entangling, and proper to be used only when the course of reasoning renders it necessary. As this observation, however, may, perhaps, be considered as over-refined, and as the sense would have remained the same in either form of expression, I do not mean to charge our author with any error on this account. We cannot absolve him from inaccuracy in what immediately follows—“ the works of nature and art.” It is the scope of the author, throughout this whole paper, to compare nature and art together, and to oppose them in several views to each other. Certainly, therefore, in the beginning, he ought to have kept them as distinct as possible, by interposing the preposition, and saying, “ The works of Nature, and of Art.” As the words stand at present, they would lead us to think that he is going to treat of these works, not as contrasted, but as connected—as united in forming one whole. When I speak of body and soul, as united in the human nature, I would interpose neither article nor preposition between them ; “ Man is compounded of soul and body.” But the case is altered, if I mean to distinguish them from each other ; then I represent them as separate ; and say, “ I am to treat of the interests of the soul, and of the body.”

“ Though they may sometimes appear as beautiful or strange.” I cannot help considering this as a loose member of the period. It does not clearly appear at first, what the antecedent is to *they*. In reading onward, we see the works of Art to be meant; but from the structure of the sentence, *they* might be understood to refer to *the former*, as well as to *the last*. In what follows, there is a greater ambiguity—“ may sometimes appear as beautiful or strange.” It is very doubtful in what sense we are to understand *as*, in this passage. For, according as it is accented in reading, it may signify, that “ they appear equally beautiful or strange,” to wit, with the works of Nature; and then it has the force of the Latin *tam*; or it may signify no more than that they “ appear in the light of beautiful and strange;” and then it has the force of the Latin *tanquam*, without importing any comparison. An expression so ambiguous is always faulty; and it is doubly so here; because, if the author intended the former sense, and meant (as seems most probable) to employ *as* for a mark of comparison, it was necessary to have mentioned both the compared objects; whereas only one member of the comparison is here mentioned, viz. the works of Art; and if he intended the latter sense, *as* was in that case superfluous and encumbering, and he had better have said simply, “ appear beautiful or strange.” The epithet *strange*, which Mr. Addison applies to the works of Art, cannot be praised. *Strange works*, appears not by any means a happy expression, to signify what he here intends, which is, new or uncommon.

The sentence concludes with much harmony and dignity—“ they can have nothing in them of that vastness and immensity which afford so great an entertainment to the mind of the beholder.” There is here a fulness and grandeur of expression

well suited to the subject ; though, perhaps, *entertainment* is not quite the proper word for expressing the effect which vastness and immensity have upon the mind. Reviewing the observations that have been made on this period, it might, I think, with advantage, be resolved into two sentences, somewhat after this manner : “ When we consider
 “ the works of nature and of art, as they are qualified to entertain the imagination, we shall find
 “ the latter very defective, in comparison of the former. The works of art may sometimes appear no less beautiful or uncommon than those
 “ of nature ; but they can have nothing of that
 “ vastness and immensity which so highly transport
 “ the mind of the beholder.”

“ The one,” proceeds our author in the next sentence, “ may be as polite and delicate as the
 “ ~~as the~~ other ; but can never show herself so
 “ august and magnificent in the design.”

The *one* and the *other*, in the first part of this sentence, must unquestionably refer to the “ works
 “ of Nature and of Art.” For of these he had been speaking immediately before ; and with reference to the plural word, *works*, had employed the plural pronoun *they*. But in the course of the sentence, he drops this construction ; and passes very incongruously to the personification of art—
 “ can never show herself.”—To render his style consistent, *art*, and not *the works of Art*, should have been made the nominative in this sentence.—“ Art may be as polite and delicate as nature, but can never show herself.”—*Polite* is a term oftener applied to persons and to manners, than to things ; and is employed to signify their being highly civilized. Polished, or refined, was the idea which the author had in view. Though the general turn of this sentence be elegant, yet, in order to render it perfect, I must observe, that

the concluding words, "in the design," should either have been altogether omitted, or something should have been properly opposed to them in the preceding member of the period, thus :
 " Art may, in the execution, be as polished and
 " delicate as nature ; but, in the design, can never
 " show herself so august and magnificent."

" There is something more bold and masterly
 " in the rough, careless strokes of nature, than
 " in the nice touches and embellishments of art."

This sentence is perfectly happy and elegant ; and carries, in all the expressions, that *curiosa felicitas*, for which mr. Addison is so often remarkable. " Bold and masterly," are words applied with the utmost propriety. The " strokes of Nature" are finely opposed to the " touches of art ;" and the *rough strokes* to the *nice touches* ; the former painting the freedom and ease of nature, and the other, the diminutive exactness of art ; while both are introduced before us as different performers, and their respective merits in execution very justly contrasted with each other.

" The beauties of the most stately garden or
 " palace lie in a narrow compass ; the imagination
 " immediately runs them over, and requires
 " something else to gratify her ; but in the wide
 " fields of nature, the sight wanders up and down
 " without confinement, and is fed with an infinite
 " variety of images, without any certain stint or
 " number."

This sentence is not altogether so correct and elegant as the former. It carries, however, in the main, the character of our author's style ; not strictly accurate, but agreeable, easy, and unaffected ; enlivened too with a slight personification of the imagination, which gives a gaiety to the period. Perhaps it had been better, if this personification of the imagination, with which the sen-

tence is introduced, had been continued through-
out, and not changed unnecessarily, and even improp-
perly, into *sight*, in the second member, which is
contrary both to unity and elegance. It might have
stood thus—"the imagination immediately runs
" them over, and requires something else to gratify
" her ; but in the wild fields of nature, she wan-
" ders up and down without confinement."—The
epithet *stately*, which the author uses in the begin-
ning of the sentence, is applicable, with more
propriety, to *palaces*, than to *gardens*. The close of
the sentence, "without any certain stint or num-
" ber," may be objected to, as both superfluous
and ungraceful. It might perhaps have terminated
better in this manner—"she is fed with an infinite
" variety of images, and wanders up and down
" without confinement."

"For this reason, we always find the poet in
" love with a country life, where nature appears
" in the greatest perfection, and furnishes out all
" those scenes that are most apt to delight the
" imagination."

There is nothing in this sentence to attract parti-
cular attention. One would think, it was rather
the *country*, than a *country life*, on which the
remark here made should rest. A *country life* may
be productive of simplicity of manners, and of
other virtues ; but it is to *the country* itself, that
the properties here mentioned belong, of display-
ing the beauties of nature, and furnishing those
scenes which delight the imagination.

"But though there are several of these wild
" scenes that are more delightful than any artificial
" shows, yet we find the works of nature still
" more pleasant, the more they resemble those of
" art ; for in this case, our pleasure rises from a
" double principle ; from the agreeableness of the
" objects to the eye, and from their similitude to

“ other objects : we are pleased, as well with comparing their beauties, as with surveying them, and can represent them to our minds either as copies, or as originals. Hence it is, that we take delight in a prospect which is well laid out, and diversified with fields and meadows, woods, and rivers ; in those accidental landscapes of trees, clouds, and cities, that are sometimes found in the veins of marble ; in the curious fretwork of rocks and grottos ; and, in a word, in any thing that hath such a degree of variety and regularity as may seem the effect of design in what we call the works of chance.”

The style, in the two sentences which compose this paragraph, is smooth and perspicuous. It lies open, in some places, to criticism ; but lest the reader should be tired of what he may consider as petty remarks, I shall pass over any which these sentences suggest ; the rather, too, as the idea which they present to us, of nature's resembling art, of art's being considered as an original, and nature as a copy, seems not very distinct nor well brought out, nor indeed very material to our author's purpose.

“ If the products of nature rise in value, according as they more or less resemble those of art, we may be sure that artificial works receive a greater advantage from the resemblance of such as are natural ; because here the similitude is not only pleasant, but the pattern more perfect.”

It is necessary to our present design, to point out two considerable inaccuracies which occur in this sentence. “ If the products” (he had better have said the productions) “ of nature rise in value according as they more or less resemble those of art.”—Does he mean, that these productions *rise in value*, both according as they *more resemble*, and as they *less resemble* those of art? His meaning

undoubtedly is, that they rise in value only, according as they "more resemble them:" and therefore, either these words, "or less," must be struck out, or the sentence must run thus—"proportions of nature rise or sink in value, according as they more or less resemble."—The present construction of the sentence has plainly been owing to hasty and careless writing.

The other inaccuracy is toward the end of the sentence, and serves to illustrate a rule which I formerly gave, concerning the position of adverbs. The author says,—“because here, the similitude is not only pleasant, but the pattern more perfect.” Here, by the position of the adverb *only*, we are led to imagine that he is going to give some other property of the similitude, that it is “not only pleasant,” as he says, but more than pleasant; it is useful, or, on some account or other, valuable. Whereas, he is going to oppose another thing to the *similitude* itself, and not to this property of its being *pleasant*; and therefore, the right collocation, beyond doubt, was, “because here, not only the similitude is pleasant, but the pattern more perfect:” the contrast lying, not between *pleasant* and *more perfect*, but between *similitude* and *pattern*.—Much of the clearness and neatness of style depends on such attentions as these.

“The prettiest landscape I ever saw, was one drawn on the walls of a dark room, which stood opposite, on one side, to a navigable river, and, on the other, to a park. The experiment is very common in optics.”

In the description of the landscape which follows, mr. Addison is abundantly happy; but in this introduction to it, he is obscure and indistinct. One who had not seen the experiment of the camera obscura, could comprehend nothing of what

he meant. And even, after we understand what he points at, we are at some loss, whether to understand his description as of one continued landscape or of two different ones, produced by the projection of two camera obscuras on opposite walls. The scene, which I am inclined to think mr. Addison here refers to, is Greenwich park, with the prospect of the Thames, as seen by a camera obscura, which is placed in a small room in the upper story of the observatory; where I remember to have seen, many years ago, the whole scene here described, corresponding so much to mr. Addison's account of it in this passage, that, at the time, it recalled it to my memory. As the observatory stands in the middle of the park, it overlooks, from one side, both the river and the park; and the objects afterwards mentioned, the ships, the trees, and the deer, are presented in one view, without needing any assistance from opposite walls. Put into plainer language, the sentence might run thus: "The prettiest landscape I ever saw, was
 " one formed by a camera obscura, a common
 " optical instrument, on the wall of a dark
 " room, which overlooked a navigable river and
 " a park."

" Here you might discover the waves and fluctuations of the water in strong and proper colours,
 " with the picture of a ship entering at one end,
 " and sailing by degrees through the whole piece.
 " On another, there appeared the green shadows
 " of trees, waving to and fro with the wind, and
 " herds of deer among them in miniature, leaping
 " about the wall."

Bating one or two small inaccuracies, this is beautiful and lively painting. The principal inaccuracy lies in the connexion of the two sentences, *here*, and *on another*. I suppose the author meant, *on one side*, and *on another side*. As it stands, *another*

is ungrammatical, having nothing to which it refers. But the fluctuations of the water, the ship entering and sailing on by degrees, the trees waving in the wind, and the herds of deer among them leaping about, are all very elegant, and give a beautiful conception of the scene meant to be described.

“ I must confess the novelty of such a sight, may be one occasion of its pleasantness to the imagination ; but certainly the chief reason is its near resemblance to nature ; as it does not only, like other pictures, give the colour and figure, but the motions of the things it represents.

In this sentence there is nothing remarkable, either to be praised or blamed. In the conclusion, instead of “ the things it represents,” the regularity of correct style requires “ the things which it represents.” In the beginning, as *one occasion* and the *chief reason* are opposed to one another, I should think it better to have repeated the same word—“ one reason of its pleasantness to the imagination ; but certainly the chief reason is,” &c.

“ We have before observed, that there is generally, in nature, something more grand and august than what we meet with in the curiosities of art. When, therefore, we see this imitated in any measure, it gives us a nobler and more exalted kind of pleasure, than what we receive from the nicer and more accurate productions of art.”

It would have been better to have avoided terminating these two sentences in a manner so similar to each other ; “ curiosities of art—productions of art.”

“ On this account, our English gardens are not so entertaining to the fancy as those in France and Italy, where we see a large extent of ground covered over with an agreeable mixture of garden

“and forest, which represent every where an artificial rudeness, much more charming than that neatness and elegance which we meet with in those of our own country.”

The expression—“represent every where an artificial rudeness” is so inaccurate, that I am inclined think, what stood in Mr. Addison’s manuscript must have been—“present every where.”—For the mixture of garden and forest does not *represent*, but actually *exhibits* or *presents* artificial rudeness. That mixture *represents* indeed *natural rudeness*, that is, is designed to imitate it; but it in reality *is*, and *presents*, *artificial rudeness*.

“It might, indeed, be of ill consequence to the public, as well as unprofitable to private persons, to alienate so much ground from pasturage and the plough, in many parts of a country that is so well peopled, and cultivated to a far greater advantage. But why may not a whole estate be thrown into a kind of garden by frequent plantations, that may turn as much to the profit as the pleasure of the owner? A marsh overgrown with willows, or a mountain shaded with oaks, are not only more beautiful, but more beneficial, than when they lie bare and unadorned. Fields of corn make a pleasant prospect; and if the walks were a little taken care of, that lie between them, and the natural embroidery of the meadows were helped and improved by some small additions of art, and the several rows of hedges were set off by trees and flowers that the soil was capable of receiving, a man might make a pretty landscape of his own possessions.”

The ideas here are just, and the style is easy and perspicuous, though in some places bordering on the careless. In that passage, for instance, “if the walks were a little taken care of, that lie be-

“tween them”—one member is clearly out of its place; and the turn of the phrase, “a little taken care of,” is vulgar and colloquial. Much better, if it had run thus—“if a little care were bestowed on the walks that lie between them.”

“Writers who have given us an account of China, tell us, the inhabitants of that country laugh at the plantations of our Europeans, which are laid out by the rule and the line; because, they say, any one may place trees in equal rows and uniform figures. They choose rather to show a genius in works of this nature, and therefore always conceal the art by which they direct themselves. They have a word, it seems, in their language, by which they express the particular beauty of a plantation, that thus strikes the imagination at first sight, without discovering what it is that has so agreeable an effect.”

These sentences furnish occasion for no remark, except that in the last of them, *particular* is improperly used, instead of *peculiar*—“the peculiar beauty of a plantation that thus strikes the imagination,” was the phrase to have conveyed the idea which the author meant; namely the beauty which distinguishes it from plantations of another kind.

“Our British gardeners, on the contrary, instead of humouring nature, love to deviate from it as much as possible. Our trees rise in cones, globes, and pyramids. We see the marks of the scissars on every plant and bush.”

These sentences are lively and elegant. They make an agreeable diversity from the strain of those which went before; and are marked with the hand of Mr. Addison. I have to remark only, that, in the phrase, “instead of humouring na-

"ture, love to deviate from it"—*humouring* and *deviating*, are terms not properly opposed to each other ; a sort of personification of nature is begun in the first of them, which is not supported in the second.—To *humouring*, was to have been opposed, *thwarting*—or if *deviating* was kept, *following*, or *going along with nature*, was to have been used.

"I do not know whether I am singular in my opinion ; but, for my own part, I would rather look upon a tree, in all its luxuriancy and diffusion of boughs and branches, than when it is thus cut and trimmed into a mathematical figure ; and cannot but fancy, that an orchard, in flower, looks infinitely more delightful, than all the little labyrinths of the most finished parterre."

This sentence is extremely harmonious, and every way beautiful. It carries all the characteristics of our author's natural, graceful, and flowing language.—A tree, in "all its luxuriancy and diffusion of boughs and branches," is a remarkably happy expression. The author seems to become luxuriant in describing an object which is so, and thereby renders the sound a perfect echo to the sense.

"But as our great modellers of gardens have their magazines of plants to dispose of, it is very natural in them, to tear up all the beautiful plantations of fruit trees, and contrive a plan that may most turn to their profit, in taking off their evergreens, and the like moveable plants, with which their shops are plentifully stocked."

An author should always study to conclude, when it is in his power, with grace and dignity. It is somewhat unfortunate, that this paper did not end, as it might very well have done, with the former beautiful period. The impression left on the mind

by the beauties of nature with which he had been entertaining us, would then have been more agreeable. But in this sentence there is a great falling off; and we return with pain from those pleasing objects, to the insignificant contents of a nurseryman's shop.

L E C T U R E XXIV.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE IN A PASSAGE OF DEAN SWIFT'S WRITINGS.

MY design in the four preceding lectures, was not merely to appreciate the merit of mr. Addison's style, by pointing out the faults and the beauties that are mingled in the writings of that great author. They were not composed with any view to gain the reputation of a critic ; but intended for the assistance of such as are desirous of studying the most proper and elegant construction of sentences in the English language. To such, it is hoped, they may be of advantage ; as the proper application of rules respecting style, will always be best learned by means of the illustration which examples afford. I conceived, that examples, taken from the writings of an author so justly esteemed, would, on that account, not only be more attended to, but would also produce this good effect, of familiarising those who study composition with the style of a writer, from whom they may, upon the whole, derive great benefit. With the same view, I shall, in this lecture, give one critical

exercise more of the same kind, upon the style of an author of a different character, dean Swift; repeating the intimation I gave formerly, that such as stand in need of no assistance of this kind, and who, therefore, will naturally consider such minute discussions concerning the propriety of words, and structure of sentences, as beneath their attention, had best pass over what will seem to them a tedious part of the work.

I formerly gave the general character of dean Swift's style. He is esteemed one of our most correct writers. His style is of the plain and simple kind; free from all affectation, and all superfluity; perspicuous, manly, and pure. These are its advantages. But we are not to look for much ornament and grace in it*. On the contrary, dean Swift seems to have slighted and despised the ornaments of language, rather than to have studied them. His arrangement is often loose and negligent. In elegant, musical, and figurative language, he is much inferior to mr. Addison. His manner of writing carries in it the character of one who rests altogether upon his sense, and aims at no more than giving his meaning in a clear and concise manner.

That part of his writings, which I shall now examine, is the beginning of his treatise, entitled, "A proposal for correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English tongue," in a letter ad-

* I am glad to find, that, in my judgment concerning this author's composition, I have coincided with the opinion of a very able critic: "This easy and safe conveyance of meaning, it was Swift's desire to attain, and for having attained, he certainly deserves praise, though, perhaps, not the highest praise. For purposes merely didactic, when something is to be told that was not known before, it is in the highest degree proper: but against that inattention by which known truths are suffered to be neglected; it makes no provision; it instructs, but does not persuade." *Johnson's lives of the poets; &c. Swift.*

addressed to the earl of Oxford, then lord high treasurer. I was led, by the nature of the subject, to choose this treatise : but, in justice to the dean, I must observe, that, after having examined it, I do not esteem it one of his most correct productions ; but am apt to think it has been more hastily composed than some other of them. It bears the title and form of a letter ; but it is, however, in truth, a treatise designed for the public : and, therefore, in examining it, we cannot proceed upon the indulgence due to an epistolary correspondence. When a man addresses himself to a friend only, it is sufficient if he makes himself fully understood by him ; but when an author writes for the public, whether he employ the form of an epistle or not, we are always entitled to expect, that he shall express himself with accuracy and care. Our author begins thus :

“ What I had the honour of mentioning to your lordship, sometime ago, in conversation, was not a new thought, just then started by accident or occasion, but the result of long reflexion ; and I have been confirmed in my sentiments by the opinion of some very judicious persons with whom I consulted.”

The disposition of circumstances in a sentence, such as serve to limit or to qualify some assertion, or to denote time and place, I formerly showed to be a matter of nicety ; and I observed, that it ought to be always held a rule, not to crowd such circumstances together, but rather to intermix them with more capital words, in such different parts of the sentence as can admit them naturally. Here are two circumstances of this kind placed together, which had better have been separated, “ Sometime ago, in conversation”—better thus—“ What I had the honour, sometime ago, of mentioning to your lordship in conversation—was not a new

“thought,” proceeds our author, “started by accident or occasion :” the different meaning of these two words may not, at first, occur. They have, however, a distinct meaning, and are properly used : for it is one very laudable property of our author’s style, that it is seldom incumbered with superfluous, synonymous words. “Started by accident,” is, fortuitously, or at random ; started “by occasion,” is, by some incident, which at that time gave birth to it. His meaning is, that it was not a new thought which either casually sprung up in his mind, or was suggested to him, for the first time, by the train of the discourse : but, as he adds, “was the result of long reflexion.” He proceeds :

“They all agreed, that nothing would be of greater use towards the improvement of knowledge and politeness, than some effectual method for correcting, enlarging, and ascertaining our language : and they think it a work very possible to be compassed under the protection of a prince, the countenance and encouragement of a ministry, and the care of proper persons chosen for such an undertaking.”

This is an excellent sentence ; clear, and elegant. The words are all simple, well chosen, and expressive ; and arranged in the most proper order. It is a harmonious period too, which is a beauty not frequent in our author. The last part of it consists of three members, which gradually rise and swell above one another, without any affected or unsuitable pomp ; “under the protection of a prince, the countenance and encouragement of a ministry, and the care of proper persons chosen for such an undertaking.” We may remark, in the beginning of the sentence, the proper use of the preposition *towards*—“greater use towards the improvement of knowledge and politeness”—

importing the pointing or tendency of any thing to a certain end ; which could not have been so well expressed by the preposition *for*, commonly employed in place of *towards*, by authors who are less attentive, than dean Swift was, to the force of words.

One fault might, perhaps, be found, both with this and the former sentence, considered as introductory ones. We expect, that an introduction is to unfold, clearly and directly, the subject that is to be treated of. In the first sentence, our author had told us of a thought he mentioned to his lordship, in conversation, which had been the result of long reflexion, and concerning which he had consulted judicious persons. But what that thought was, we are never told directly. We gather it, indeed, from the second sentence, wherein he informs us, in what these judicious persons agreed ; namely, that some method for improving the language was both useful and practicable. But this indirect method of opening the subject, would have been very faulty in a regular treatise ; though the ease of the epistolary form, which our author here assumes in addressing his patron, may excuse it in the present case.

“ I was glad to find your lordship’s answer in
 “ so different a style from what hath commonly
 “ been made use of, on the like occasions, for
 “ some years past ; ‘ That all such thoughts must
 “ be deferred to a time of peace ;’ a topic which
 “ some have carried so far, that they would not
 “ have us, by any means, think of preserving our
 “ civil and religious constitution, because we are
 “ engaged in a war abroad.

This sentence also is clear and elegant ; only there is one inaccuracy when he speaks of his lordship’s *answer* being in so different a style from what had formerly been used. His *answer* to what ? or to

whom? For from any thing going before, it does not appear that any application or address had been made to his lordship by those persons, whose opinion was mentioned in the preceding sentence; and to whom the answer, here spoken of, naturally refers. There is a little indistinctness, as I before observed, in our author's manner of introducing his subject here.—We may observe too, that the phrase “glad to find your answer in so different a style”—though abundantly suited to the language of conversation, or of a familiar letter, yet, in regular composition, requires an additional word—“glad to find your answer run in so different a style.”

It will be among the distinguishing marks of your ministry, my lord, that you have a genius above all such regards, and that no reasonable proposal, for the honour, the advantage, or ornament of your country, however foreign to your immediate office, was ever neglected by you.

The phrase—“a genius above all such regards,” both seems somewhat harsh, and does not clearly express what the author means, namely, the *confined views* of those who neglected every thing that belonged to the arts of peace in the time of war.—Except this expression, there is nothing that can be subject to the least reprehension in this sentence, nor in all that follows, to the end of the paragraph.

I confess, the merit of this candour and confession is very much lessened, because your lordship hardly leaves us room to offer our good wishes; removing all our difficulties, and supplying our wants, faster than the most visionary projector can adjust his schemes. And therefore, my lord, the design of this paper is not so much to offer you ways and means, as to complain of

“ a grievance, the redressing of which is to be
 “ your own work, as much as that of paying the
 “ nation’s debts, or opening a trade into the South
 “ Sea ; and, though not of such immediate benefit
 “ as either of these, or any other of your glorious
 “ actions, yet, perhaps, in future ages not less to
 “ your honour.”

The compliments which the dean here pays to his patron, are very high and strained ; and show, that, with all his furliness, he was as capable, on some occasions, of making his court to a great man by flattery, as other writers. However, with respect to the style, which is the sole object of our present consideration, every thing here, as far as appears to me, is faultless. In these sentences, and, indeed, throughout this paragraph, in general, which we have now ended, our author’s style appears to great advantage. We see that ease and simplicity, that correctness and distinctness, which particularly characterise it. It is very remarkable, how few latinised words dean Swift employs. No writer, in our language, is so purely English as he is, or borrows so little assistance from words of foreign derivation. From none can we take a better model of the choice and proper significancy of words. It is remarkable, in the sentences we have now before us, how plain all the expressions are, and yet, at the same time, how significant ; and in the midst of that high strain of compliment into which he rises, how little there is of pomp, or glare of expression. How very few writers can preserve this manly temperance of style ; or would think a compliment of this nature supported with sufficient dignity, unless they had embellished it with some of those high-sounding words, whose chief effect is no other than to give their language a stiff and forced appearance ?

“ My lord, I do here, in the name of all the

“ learned and polite persons of the nation, complain
 “ to your lordship, as first minister, that our lan-
 “ guage is extremely imperfect; that its daily
 “ improvements are by no means in proportion to
 “ its daily corruptions; that the pretenders to
 “ polish and refine it, have chiefly multiplied abuses
 “ and absurdities; and that, in many instances, it
 “ offends against every part of grammar.”

The turn of this sentence is extremely elegant. He had spoken before of a grievance for which he sought redress, and he carries on the allusion, by entering, here, directly on his subject, in the style of a public representation presented to the minister of state. One imperfection, however, there is in this sentence, which, luckily for our purpose, serves to illustrate a rule before given, concerning the position of adverbs, so as to avoid ambiguity. It is in the middle of the sentence;—“ that the pretenders to polish and refine it, have chiefly multiplied abuses and absurdities.”—Now concerning the import of this adverb, *chiefly*, I ask, whether it signifies that these pretenders to polish the language, have been the *chief persons* who have multiplied its abuses, in distinction from others; or, that the *chief thing* which these pretenders have done, is to multiply the abuses of our language, in opposition to “ their doing any thing to refine it ?” These two meanings are really different; and yet, by the position which the word *chiefly* has in the sentence, we are left at a loss in which to understand it. The construction would lead us rather to the latter sense; that the chief thing which these pretenders have done, is to multiply the abuses of our language. But it is more than probable, that the former sense was what the dean intended, as it carries more of his usual satirical edge; “ that the pretended reformers of our language were, in fact, its chief corrupters;” on which supposition, his words ought

to have run thus : “ that the pretenders to polish
 “ and refine it, have been the chief persons to
 “ multiply its abuses and absurdities ;” which
 would have rendered the sense perfectly clear.

Perhaps, too, there might be ground for observing farther upon this sentence, that as language is the object with which it sets out ; “ that our language is extremely imperfect ;” and as there follows an enumeration concerning language, in three particulars, it had been better if language had been kept the ruling word, or the nominative to every verb, without changing the construction ; by making *pretenders* the ruling word, as is done in the second member of the enumeration, and then, in the third, returning again to the former word, *language*—“ That the pretenders to polish—and that, in many instances, it offends”—I am persuaded, that the structure of the sentence would have been more neat and happy, and its unity more complete, if the members of it had been arranged thus : “ That our language is extremely imperfect ; that its daily improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily corruptions ; that, in many instances, it offends against every part of grammar ; and that the pretenders to polish and refine it, have been the chief persons to multiply its abuses and absurdities.”—This degree of attention seemed proper to be bestowed on such a sentence as this, in order to show how it might have been conducted after the most perfect manner. Our author, after having said,

“ Lest your lordship should think my censure too severe, I shall take leave to be more particular ;” proceeds in the following paragraph :

“ I believe your lordship will agree with me, in the reason why our language is less refined than those of Italy, Spain, or France.”

I am sorry to say, that now we shall have less

commend in our author. For the whole of this paragraph, on which we are entering, is, in truth, perplexed and inaccurate. Even, in this short sentence, we may discern an inaccuracy—"why our language is less refined than those of Italy, Spain, or France;" putting the pronoun *those* in the plural, when the antecedent substantive to which it refers is in the singular, *our language*. Instances of this kind may sometimes be found in English authors; but they sound harsh to the ear, and are certainly contrary to the purity of grammar. By a very little attention, this inaccuracy might have been remedied; and the sentence have been made to run much better in this way; "why our language is less refined than the Italian, Spanish, or French."

"It is plain, that the Latin tongue, in its purity, was never in this island; towards the conquest of which, few or no attempts were made till the time of Claudius; neither was that language ever so vulgar in Britain as it is known to have been in Gaul and Spain."

To say, that "the Latin tongue, in its purity, was never in this island," is very careless style; it ought to have been, "was never spoken in this island." In the progress of the sentence, he means to give a reason why the Latin was never spoken in its purity amongst us, because our island was not conquered by the Romans, till after the purity of their tongue began to decline. But this reason ought to have been brought out more clearly. This might easily have been done, and the relation of the several parts of the sentence to each other much better pointed out by means of a small variation; thus: "It is plain that the Latin tongue, in its purity, was never spoken in this island, as few or no attempts towards the conquest of it were made till the time of Clau-

“ dius.” He adds, “ Neither was that language
 “ ever so vulgar in Britain.”—*Vulgar* was one of
 the worst words he could have chosen for expressing
 what he means here ; namely, that the Latin
 tongue was at no time so *general*, or so much in
common use, in Britain, as it is known to have been
 in Gaul and Spain.—*Vulgar*, when applied to lan-
 guage, commonly signifies impure, or debased lan-
 guage, such as is spoken by the low people, which is
 quite opposite to the author’s sense here ; for, in-
 stead of meaning to say, that the Latin spoken in
 Britain was not so debased, as what was spoken in
 Gaul and Spain ; he means just the contrary, and
 had been telling us, that we never were acquaint-
 ed with the Latin at all, till its purity began to be
 corrupted.

“ Further, we find that the Roman legions
 “ here were at length all recalled to help their
 “ country against the Goths, and other barbarous
 “ invaders.”

The chief scope of this sentence is, to give a
 reason why the Latin tongue did not strike any
 deep root in this island, on account of the short
 continuance of the Romans in it. He goes on :

“ Meantime the Britons, left to shift for them-
 “ selves, and daily harrassed by cruel inroads from
 “ the Picts, were forced to call in the Saxons for
 “ their defence ; who, consequently, reduced the
 “ greatest part of the island to their own power,
 “ drove the Britons into the most remote and
 “ mountainous parts ; and the rest of the coun-
 “ try, in customs, religion, and language, became
 “ wholly Saxon.”

This is a very exceptionable sentence. First, the
 phrase, “ left to shift for themselves,” is rather a
 low phrase, and too much in the familiar style, to
 be proper in a grave treatise. Next, as the sentence
 advances—“ forced to call in the Saxons for their

“ defence, who, consequently, reduced the greatest part of the island to their own power.” What is the meaning of *consequently* here? if it means “ afterwards,” or “ in progress of time,” this, certainly, is not a sense in which *consequently* is often taken; and therefore the expression is chargeable with obscurity. The adverb, *consequently*, in its most common acceptation, denotes one thing following from another, as an effect from a cause. If he uses it in this sense, and means that the Britons being subdued by the Saxons, was a necessary consequence of their having called in these Saxons to their assistance, this consequence is drawn too abruptly, and needed more explanation. For though it has often happened, that nations have been subdued by their own auxiliaries, yet this is not a consequence of such a nature that it can be assumed, as it seems here to be done, for a first and self-evident principle. But further, what shall we say to this phrase, “ reduced the greatest part of the island to their own power?” we say, “ reduce to rule, reduce to practice”—we can say, that “ one nation reduces another to subjection.” But when *dominion* or *power* is used, we always, as far as I know, say “ reduce under their power.” “ Reduce to their power,” is so harsh and uncommon an expression, that, though dean Swift’s authority in language be very great, yet, in the use of this phrase, I am of opinion that it would not be safe to follow his example.

Besides these particular inaccuracies, this sentence is chargeable with want of unity in the composition of the whole. The persons and the scene are too often changed upon us—First, the Britons are mentioned, who are harrassed by inroads from the Picts; next, the Saxons appear, who subdue the greatest part of the island, and drive the Britons into the mountains; and, lastly, the rest of the coun-

try is introduced, and a description given of the change made upon it. All this forms a groupe of various objects, presented in such quick succession, that the mind finds it difficult to comprehend them under one view. Accordingly, it is quoted in the Elements of Criticism, as an instance of a sentence rendered faulty by the breach of unity.

“ This I take to be the reason why there are
 “ more Latin words remaining in the British than
 “ the old Saxon ; which, excepting some few variations in the orthography, is the same in most
 “ original words with our present English, as
 “ well as with the German and other northern
 “ dialects.”

This sentence is faulty, somewhat in the same manner with the last. It is loose in the connexion of its parts ; and, besides this, it is also too loosely connected with the preceding sentence. What he had there said, concerning the Saxons expelling the Britons, and changing the customs, the religion, and the language of the country, is a clear and good reason for our present language being Saxon rather than British. This is the inference which we would naturally expect him to draw from the premises just before laid down. But when he tells us, that
 “ this is the reason why there are more Latin
 “ words remaining in the British tongue than in
 “ the old Saxon,” we are presently at a stand. No reason for this inference appears. If it can be gathered at all from the foregoing deduction, it is gathered only imperfectly. For, as he had told us that the Britons had *some* connexion with the Romans, he should have also told us, in order to make out his inference, that the Saxons never had *any*. The truth is, the whole of this paragraph, concerning the influence of the Latin tongue upon ours; is careless, perplexed, and obscure. His argument required to have been more fully unfolded,

in order to make it be distinctly apprehended, and to give it its due force. In the next paragraph, he proceeds to discourse concerning the influence of the French tongue upon our language. The style becomes more clear, though not remarkable for great beauty or elegance.

“ Edward the confessor having lived long in
 “ France, appears to be the first who introduced
 “ any mixture of the French tongue with the Sax-
 “ on ; the court affecting what the prince was
 “ fond of, and others taking it up for a fashion, as
 “ it is now with us. William the conqueror pro-
 “ ceeded much further, bringing over with him
 “ vast numbers of that nation, scattering them in
 “ every monastery, giving them great quantities
 “ of land, directing all pleadings to be in that
 “ language, and endeavouring to make it universal
 “ in the kingdom.”

On these two sentences, I have nothing of moment to observe. The sense is brought out clearly, and in simple, unaffected language.

“ This, at least, is the opinion generally re-
 “ ceived ; but your lordship hath fully convinced
 “ me, that the French tongue made yet a greater
 “ progress here under Harry the second, who had
 “ large territories on that continent both from
 “ his father and his wife ; made frequent journeys
 “ and expeditions thither ; and was always at-
 “ tended with a number of his countrymen, retain-
 “ ers at court.”

In the beginning of this sentence, our author states an opposition between an opinion generally received, and that of his lordship ; and, in compliment to his patron, he tells us, that his lordship had convinced him of somewhat that differed from the general opinion. Thus one must naturally understand his words : “ This, at least, is the opi-
 “ nion generally received ; but your lordship

“ hath fully convinced me”—Now here there must be an inaccuracy of expression. For, on examining what went before, there appears no sort of opposition betwixt the generally received opinion, and that of the author’s patron. The general opinion was, that William the conqueror had proceeded much farther than Edward the confessor, in propagating the French language, and had endeavoured to make it universal. Lord Oxford’s opinion was, that the French tongue had gone on to make a yet greater progress under Harry the second, than it had done under his predecessor William : which two opinions are as entirely consistent with each other, as any can be ; and therefore the opposition here affected to be stated between them, by the adversative particle *but*, was improper and groundless.

“ For some centuries after, there was a constant
 “ intercourse between France and England by the
 “ dominions we possessed there, and the conquests
 “ we made ; so that our language, between two
 “ and three hundred years ago, seems to have had
 “ a greater mixture with French than at present ;
 “ many words having been afterwards rejected,
 “ and some since the days of Spenser ; although
 “ we have still retained not a few, which
 “ have been long antiquated in France.”

This is a sentence too long and intricate, and liable to the same objection that was made to a former one, of the want of unity. It consists of four members, each divided from the subsequent by a semicolon. In going along, we naturally expect the sentence is to end at the second of these, or, at farthest, at the third ; when, to our surprise, a new member of the period makes its appearance ; and fatigues our attention in joining all the parts together. Such a structure of a sentence is always the mark of careless writing. In the first mem-

of the sentence, “ a constant intercourse between France and England, by the dominions we possessed there, and the conquests we made,” the construction is not sufficiently filled up. In place of “ intercourse by the dominions we possessed,” it should have been—“ by reason of the dominions we possessed”—or—“ occasioned by the dominions we possessed”—and in place of—“ the dominions we possessed there, and the conquests we made,” the regular style is—“ the dominions which we possessed there, and the conquests which we made.” The relative pronoun *which*, is indeed in phrases of this kind sometimes omitted : but, when it is omitted, the style becomes elliptic ; and though in conversation, or in the very light and easy kinds of writing, such elliptic style may not be improper, yet in grave and regular writing, it is better to fill up the construction, and insert the relative pronoun.—After having said—“ I could produce several instances of both kinds, if it were, of any use or entertainment”—our author begins the next paragraph thus :

“ To examine into the several circumstances by which the language of a country may be altered, would force me to enter into a wide field.”

There is nothing remarkable in this sentence, unless that here occurs the first instance of a metaphor since the beginning of this treatise ; “ entering into a wide field,” being put for beginning an extensive subject. Few writers deal less in figurative language than Swift. I before observed, that he appears to despise ornaments of this kind ; and though this renders his style somewhat dry on serious subjects, yet his plainness and simplicity, I must not forbear to remind my readers, are far preferable to an ostentatious and affected parade of ornament.

“ I shall only observe, that the Latin, the
 “ French, and the English, seem to have under-
 “ gone the same fortune. The first from the days
 “ of Romulus, to those of Julius Cesar, suffered
 “ perpetual changes ; and by what we meet in
 “ those authors who occasionally speak on that
 “ subject, as well as from certain fragments of old
 “ laws, it is manifest, that the Latin, three hundred
 “ years before Tully, was as unintelligible in his
 “ time, as the French and English of the same pe-
 “ riod are now ; and these two have changed as
 “ much since William the conqueror (which is but
 “ little less than seven hundred years), as the Latin
 “ appears to have done in the like term.”

The dean plainly appears to be writing negli-
 gently here. This sentence is one of that involved
 and intricate kind, of which some instances have
 occurred before ; but none worse than this. It
 requires a very distinct head to comprehend the
 whole meaning of the period at first reading. In
 one part of it we find extreme carelessness of ex-
 pression. He says, “ it is manifest that the Latin,
 “ three hundred years before Tully, was as un-
 “ intelligible in his time, as the English and French
 “ of the same period are now.” By the English
 and French “ of the same period,” must naturally
 be understood, “ the English and French that
 “ were spoken three hundred years before Tully.”
 This is the only grammatical meaning his words
 will bear ; and yet assuredly what he means, and
 what it would have been easy for him to have ex-
 pressed with more precision, is, “ the English and
 “ French that were spoken three hundred years
 “ ago ;” or at a period equally distant from our
 age, as the old Latin, which he had mentioned,
 was from the age of Tully. But when an author
 writes hastily, and does not review with proper

care what he has written, many such inaccuracies will be apt to creep into his style:

“ Whether our language or the French will decline as fast as the Roman did, is a question that would perhaps admit more debate than it is worth. There were many reasons for the corruptions of the last ; as the change of their government to a tyranny, which ruined the study of eloquence, there being no further use or encouragement for popular orators ; their giving not only the freedom of the city, but capacity for employments, to several towns in Gaul, Spain, and Germany, and other distant parts, as far as Asia, which brought a great number of foreign pretenders to Rome ; the slavish disposition of the senate and people, by which the wit and eloquence of the age were wholly turned into panegyric, the most barren of all subjects ; the great corruption of manners, and introduction of foreign luxury, with foreign terms to express it, with several others that might be assigned ; not to mention the invasion from the Goths and Vandals, which are too obvious to insist on.”

In the enumeration here made of the causes contributing towards the corruption of the Roman language, there are many inaccuracies—“ The change of their government to a tyranny”—of whose government ? He had indeed been speaking of the Roman language, and therefore we guess at his meaning ; but the style is ungrammatical ; for he had not mentioned the Romans themselves ; and therefore, when he says “ their government,” there is no antecedent in the sentence to which the pronoun, *their*, can refer with any propriety.—“ Giving the capacity for employments to several towns in Gaul,” is a questionable expression. For though towns are sometimes put for the people who

inhabit them, yet to give a town "the capacity
 "for employments," sounds harsh and uncouth.—
 "The wit and eloquence of the age wholly turned
 "into panegyric," is a phrase which does not well
 express the meaning. Neither wit nor eloquence
 can be turned into panegyric; but they may be
 turned "towards panegyric," or, "employed in
 "panegyric," which was the sense the author had
 in view.

The conclusion of the enumeration is visibly incorrect—"The great corruption of manners, and
 "introduction of foreign luxury, with foreign
 "terms to express it, with several others that
 "might be assigned—" He means, "with several
 "other reasons." The word *reasons*, had indeed
 been mentioned before; but as it stands at the
 distance of thirteen lines backward, the repetition of
 it here became indispensable, in order to avoid
 ambiguity. "Not to mention," he adds, "the
 "invasions from the Goths and Vandals, which are
 "too obvious to insist on." One would imagine
 him to mean, that the invasions from the Goths
 and Vandals, are *historical facts* too well known
 and obvious to be insisted on. But he means quite
 a different thing, though he has not taken the
 proper method of expressing it, through his haste,
 probably, to finish the paragraph; namely, that
 these invasions from the Goths and Vandals "were
 "causes of the corruption of the Roman language
 "too obvious to be insisted on."

I shall not pursue this criticism any farther. I
 have been obliged to point out many inaccuracies in
 the passage which we have considered. But, in order
 that my observations may not be construed as meant
 to depreciate the style or the writings of dean Swift
 below their just value, there are two remarks,
 which I judge it necessary to make before concluding
 this lecture. One is, that it were unfair to esti-

mate an author's style on the whole, by some passage in his writings, which chances to be composed in a careless manner. This is the case with respect to this treatise, which has much the appearance of a hasty production; though, as I before observed, it was by no means on that account that I pitched upon it for the subject of this exercise. But after having examined it, I am sensible, that, in many other of his writings, the dean is more accurate.

My other observation, which is equally applicable to dean Swift and Mr. Addison, is, that there may be writers much freer from such inaccuracies, as I have had occasion to point out in these two, whose style, however, upon the whole, may not have half their merit. Refinement in language has, of late years, begun to be much attended to. In several modern productions of very small value, I should find it difficult to point out many errors in language. The words might, probably, be all proper words, correctly and clearly arranged; and the turn of the sentence sonorous and musical; whilst yet the style, upon the whole, might deserve no praise. The fault often lies in what may be called the general cast or complexion of the style; which a person of a good taste discerns to be vicious; to be feeble, for instance, and diffuse; flimsy or affected; petulant or ostentatious; though the faults cannot be so easily pointed out and particularised, as when they lie in some erroneous, or negligent construction of a sentence. Whereas, such writers as Addison and Swift, carry always those general characters of good style, which, in the midst of their occasional negligences, every person of good taste must discern and approve. We see their faults overbalanced by higher beauties. We see a writer of sense and reflexion expressing his sentiments without affectation, attentive to thoughts as well

as to words : and, in the main current of his language, elegant and beautiful ; and, therefore, the only proper use to be made of the blemishes which occur in the writings of such authors, is to point out to those who apply themselves to the study of composition, some of the rules which they ought to observe for avoiding such errors ; and to render them sensible of the necessity of strict attention to language and to style. Let them imitate the ease and simplicity of those great authors ; let them study to be always natural, and, as far as they can, always correct in their expressions ; let them endeavour to be, at some times, lively and striking ; but carefully avoid being at any time ostentatious and affected.

LECTURE XXV.

ELOQUENCE, OR PUBLIC SPEAKING— HISTORY OF ELOQUENCE—GRECIAN ELOQUENCE—DEMOSTHENES.

HAVING finished that part of the course which relates to language and style, we are now to ascend a step higher, and to examine the subjects upon which style is employed. I begin with what is properly called eloquence, or public speaking. In treating of this, I am to consider the different kinds and subjects of public speaking; the manner suited to each; the proper distribution and management of all the parts of a discourse; and the proper pronunciation or delivery of it. But before I enter on any of these heads, it may be proper to take a view of the nature of eloquence in general, and of the state in which it has subsisted in different ages and countries. This will lead into some detail; but I hope an useful one; as in every art it is of great consequence to have a just idea of the perfection of that art, of the end at which it aims, and of the progress which it has made among mankind.

Of eloquence, in particular, it is the more necessary to ascertain the proper notion, because there

is not any thing concerning which false notions have been more prevalent. Hence, it has been so often, and is still at this day, in disrepute with many. When you speak to a plain man of eloquence, or in praise of it, he is apt to hear you with very little attention. He conceives eloquence to signify a certain trick of speech ; the art of varnishing weak arguments plausibly ; or of speaking so as to please and tickle the ear. " Give me good sense," says he, " and keep your eloquence for boys." He is in the right, if eloquence were what he conceives it to be. It would be then a very contemptible art, indeed, below the study of any wise or good man. But nothing can be more remote from truth. To be truly eloquent, is to speak to the purpose. For the best definition, which, I think, can be given of eloquence, is the art of speaking in such a manner as to attain the end for which we speak. Whenever a man speaks or writes, he is supposed, as a rational being, to have some end in view ; either to inform, or to amuse, or to persuade, or ; in some way or other, to act upon his fellow-creatures. He who speaks, or writes, in such a manner as to adapt all his words most effectually to that end, is the most eloquent man. Whatever then the subject be, there is room for eloquence ; in history, or even in philosophy, as well as in orations. The definition which I have given of eloquence, comprehends all the different kinds of it, whether calculated to instruct ; to persuade, or to please. But, as the most important subject of discourse is action, or conduct, the power of eloquence chiefly appears when it is employed to influence conduct, and persuade to action. As it is principally with reference to this end, that it becomes the object of art, eloquence may, under this view of it, be defined, the art of persuasion.

- This being once established, certain consequences

immediately follow, which point out the fundamental maxims of the art. It follows clearly, that, in order to persuade, the most essential requisites are, solid argument, clear method, a character of probity appearing in the speaker, joined with such graces of style and utterance, as shall draw our attention to what he says. Good sense is the foundation of all. No man can be truly eloquent without it; for fools can persuade none but fools. In order to persuade a man of sense, you must first convince him; which is only to be done, by satisfying his understanding of the reasonableness of what you propose to him.

This leads me to observe, that convincing and persuading, though they are sometimes confounded, import, notwithstanding, different things, which it is necessary for us, at present, to distinguish from each other. Conviction affects the understanding only; persuasion, the will and the practice. It is the business of the philosopher to convince me of truth; it is the business of the orator, to persuade me to act agreeably to it, by engaging my affections on its side. Conviction, and persuasion, do not always go together. They *ought*, indeed, to go together; and *would* do so, if our inclination regularly followed the dictates of our understanding. But as our nature is constituted, I may be convinced, that virtue, justice, or public spirit, are laudable, while, at the same time, I am not persuaded to act according to them. The inclination may revolt, though the understanding be satisfied; the passions may prevail against the judgment. Conviction is, however, always one avenue to the inclination, or heart; and it is that which an orator must first bend his strength to gain: for no persuasion is likely to be stable, which is not founded on conviction. But, in order to persuade, the orator must go farther than merely

producing conviction ; he must consider man as a creature moved by many different springs, and must act upon them all. He must address himself to the passions ; he must paint to the fancy, and touch the heart ; and, hence, besides solid argument, and clear method, all the conciliating and interesting arts, both of composition and pronunciation, enter into the idea of eloquence.

An objection, may, perhaps, hence be formed against eloquence, as an art which may be employed for persuading to ill, as well as to good. There is no doubt that it may ; and so reasoning may also be, and too often is employed, for leading men into error. But who would think of forming an argument from this against the cultivation of our reasoning powers ? Reason, eloquence, and every art which ever has been studied among mankind, may be abused, and may prove dangerous in the hands of bad men ; but it were perfectly childish to contend, that, upon this account, they ought to be abolished. Give truth and virtue the same arms which you give vice and falsehood, and the former are likely to prevail. Eloquence is no invention of the schools. Nature teaches every man to be eloquent, when he is much in earnest. Place him in some critical situation ; let him have some great interest at stake, and you will see him lay hold of the most effectual means of persuasion. The art of oratory proposes nothing more than to follow out that track which nature has first pointed out. And the more exactly that this track is pursued, the more that eloquence is properly studied, the more shall we be guarded against the abuse which bad men make of it, and enabled the better to distinguish between true eloquence and the tricks of sophistry.

We may distinguish three kinds, or degrees of eloquence. The first, and lowest, is that which

aims only at pleasing the hearers. Such, generally, is the eloquence of panegyrics, inaugural orations, addresses to great men, and other harangues of this sort. This ornamental sort of composition is not altogether to be rejected. It may innocently amuse and entertain the mind ; and it may be mixed, at the same time, with very useful sentiments. But it must be confessed that where the speaker has no farther aim than merely to shine and to please, there is great danger of art being strained into ostentation, and of the composition becoming tiresome and languid.

A second and a higher degree of eloquence is when the speaker aims not merely to please, but also to inform, to instruct, to convince : when his art is exerted in removing prejudices against himself and his cause, in choosing the most proper arguments, stating them with the greatest force, arranging them in the best order, expressing and delivering them with propriety and beauty ; and thereby disposing us to pass that judgment, or embrace that side of the cause to which he seeks to bring us. Within this compass, chiefly, is employed the eloquence of the bar.

But there is a third, and still higher degree of eloquence, wherein a greater power is exerted over the human mind ; by which we are not only convinced, but are interested, agitated, and carried along with the speaker ; our passions are made to rise together with his ; we enter into all his emotions ; we love, we detest, we resent, according as he inspires us ; and are prompted to resolve, or to act, with vigour and warmth. Debate, in popular assemblies, opens the most illustrious field to this species of eloquence ; and the pulpit also admits it.

I am here to observe, and the observation is of consequence, that the high eloquence which I have last mentioned, is always the offspring of

passion. By passion, I mean that state of the mind in which it is agitated, and fired, by some object it has in view. A man may convince, and even persuade others to act, by mere reason and argument. But that degree of eloquence which gains the admiration of mankind, and properly denominates one an orator, is never found without warmth, or passion. Passion, when in such a degree as to rouse and kindle the mind, without throwing it out of the possession of itself, is universally found to exalt all the human powers. It renders the mind infinitely more enlightened, more penetrating, more vigorous and masterly, than it is in its calm moments. A man actuated by a strong passion, becomes much greater than he is at other times. He is conscious of more strength and force; he utters greater sentiments, conceives higher designs, and executes them with a boldness and a felicity, of which, on other occasions, he could not think himself capable. But chiefly, with respect to persuasion, is the power of passion felt. Almost every man, in passion, is eloquent. Then, he is at no loss for words and arguments. He transmits to others, by a sort of contagious sympathy, the warm sentiments which he feels; his looks and gestures are all persuasive; and nature here shows herself infinitely more powerful than art. This is the foundation of that just and noted rule: “*Si vis me fieri, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi.*”

This principle being once admitted, that all high eloquence flows from passion, several consequences follow, which deserve to be attended to; and the mention of which will serve to confirm the principle itself. For hence, the universally acknowledged effect of enthusiasm, or warmth of any kind, in public speakers, for affecting their audience. Hence all laboured declamation, and

affected ornaments of style, which show the mind to be cool and unmoved, are so inconsistent with persuasive eloquence. Hence all studied prettinesses, in gesture or pronunciation, detract so greatly from the weight of a speaker. Hence a discourse that is read, moves us less than one that is spoken, as having less the appearance of coming warm from the heart. Hence, to call a man cold, is the same thing as to say, that he is not eloquent. Hence a sceptical man, who is always in suspense, and feels nothing strongly—or a cunning, mercenary man, who is suspected rather to assume the appearance of passion than to feel it—have so little power over men in public speaking. Hence, in fine, the necessity of being, and being believed to be, disinterested, and in earnest, in order to persuade.

These are some of the capital ideas which have occurred to me, concerning eloquence in general; and with which I have thought proper to begin, as the foundation of much of what I am afterwards to suggest. From what I have already said, it is evident, that eloquence is a high talent, and of great importance in society; and that it requires both natural genius, and much improvement from art. Viewed as the art of persuasion, it requires, in its lowest state, soundness of understanding, and considerable acquaintance with human nature; and, in its higher degrees, it requires, moreover, strong sensibility of mind, a warm and lively imagination, joined with correctness of judgment, and an extensive command of the power of language; to which must also be added, the graces of pronunciation and delivery. Let us next proceed to consider in what state eloquence has subsisted in different ages and nations.

It is an observation made by several writers, that eloquence is to be looked for only in free states. Longinus, in particular, at the end of his

trratise on the sublime, when assigning the reason why so little sublimity of genius appeared in the age wherein he lived, illustrates this observation with a great deal of beauty. Liberty, he remarks, is the nurse of true genius ; it animates the spirit, and invigorates the hopes of men ; excites honourable emulation, and a desire of excelling in every art. All other qualifications, he says, you may find among those who are deprived of liberty ; but never did a slave become an orator ; he can only be a pompous flatterer. Now, though this reasoning be, in the main, true ; it must, however, be understood with some limitations. For, under arbitrary governments, if they be of the civilized kind, and give encouragement to the arts, ornamented eloquence may flourish remarkably. Witness France at this day, where, ever since the reign of Louis XIV. more of what may justly be called eloquence, within a certain sphere, is to be found, than, perhaps, in any other nation in Europe ; though freedom be enjoyed by some nations in a much greater degree. The French sermons, and orations pronounced on public occasions, are not only polite and elegant harangues, but several of them are uncommonly spirited, are animated with bold figures, and rise to a degree of the sublime. Their eloquence, however, in general, must be confessed to be of the flowery, rather than the vigorous kind ; calculated more to please and soothe, than to convince and persuade. High, manly, and forcible eloquence is, indeed, to be looked for only, or chiefly in the regions of freedom. Under arbitrary governments, besides the general turn of softness and effeminacy which such governments may be justly supposed to give to the spirit of a nation, the art of speaking cannot be such an instrument of ambition, business, and power, as it is in democratical states. It is confined within a narrower

range; it can be employed only in the pulpit, or at the bar; but is excluded from those great scenes of public business, where the spirits of men have the freest exertion; where important affairs are transacted, and persuasion, of course, is more seriously studied. Wherever man can acquire most power over man by means of reason and discourse, which certainly is under a free state of government, there we may naturally expect that true eloquence will be best understood, and carried to the greatest height.

Hence, in tracing the rise of oratory, we need not attempt to go far back into the early ages of the world, or search for it among the monuments of eastern or Egyptian antiquity. In those ages, there was, indeed, an eloquence of a certain kind; but it approached nearer to poetry, than to what we properly call oratory. There is reason to believe, as I formerly showed, that the language of the first ages was passionate and metaphorical; owing partly to the scanty stock of words, of which speech then consisted; and partly to the tincture which language naturally takes from the savage and uncultivated state of men, agitated by unrestrained passions, and struck by events, which to them are strange and surprising. In this state, rapture and enthusiasm, the parents of poetry, had an ample field. But while the intercourse of men was as yet unfrequent, and force and strength were the chief means employed in deciding controversies, the arts of oratory and persuasion, of reasoning and debate, could be but little known. The first empires that arose, the Assyrian and Egyptian, were of the despotic kind. The whole power was in the hands of one, or at most of a few. The multitude were accustomed to a blind reverence: they were led, not persuaded; and none of those refinements of society, which make public speaking an object of importance, were as yet introduced.

It is not till the rise of the Grecian republics, that we find any remarkable appearances of eloquence as the art of persuasion ; and these gave it such a field as it never had before, and, perhaps, has never had again since that time. And, therefore, as the Grecian eloquence has ever been the object of admiration to those who have studied the powers of speech, it is necessary, that we fix our attention, for a little, on this period.

Greece was divided into a multitude of petty states. These were governed, at first, by kings who were called tyrants ; on whose expulsion from all these states, there sprung up a great number of democratical governments, founded nearly on the same plan, animated by the same high spirit of freedom, mutually jealous, and rivals of one another. We may compute the flourishing period of those Grecian states, to have lasted from the battle of Marathon, till the time of Alexander the great, who subdued the liberties of Greece ; a period which comprehends about 150 years, and within which are to be found most of their celebrated poets and philosophers, but chiefly their orators ; for though poetry and philosophy were not extinct among them after that period, yet eloquence hardly made any figure.

Of these Grecian republics, the most noted, by far, for eloquence, and, indeed, for arts of every kind, was that of Athens. The Athenians were an ingenious, quick, sprightly people ; practised in business, and sharpened by frequent and sudden revolutions, which happened in their government. The genius of their government was altogether democratical ; their legislature consisted of the whole body of the people. They had, indeed, a senate of five hundred ; but in the general convention of the citizens was placed the last resort ; and affairs were conducted there, entirely, by

reasoning, speaking, and a skilful application to the passions and interests of a popular assembly. There, laws were made, peace and war decreed, and thence the magistrates were chosen. For the highest honours of the state were alike open to all ; nor was the meanest tradesman excluded from a seat in their supreme courts. In such a state, eloquence, it is obvious, would be much studied, as the surest means of rising to influence and power ; and what sort of eloquence ? Not that which was brilliant merely, and showy, but that which was found, upon trial, to be most effectual for convincing, interesting, and persuading the hearers. For there, public speaking was not a mere competition for empty applause, but a serious contention for that public leading, which was the great object both of the men of ambition, and the men of virtue.

In so enlightened and acute a nation, where the highest attention was paid to every thing elegant in the arts, we may naturally expect to find the public taste refined and judicious. Accordingly, it was improved to such a degree, that the Attic taste and Attic manner have passed into a proverb. It is true, that ambitious demagogues, and corrupt orators, did sometimes dazzle and mislead the people, by a showy but false eloquence ; for the Athenians, with all their acuteness, were factious and giddy, and great admirers of every novelty. But when some important interest drew their attention, when any great danger roused them, and put their judgment to a serious trial, they commonly distinguished, very justly, between genuine and spurious eloquence : and hence Demosthenes triumphed over all his opponents ; because he spoke always to the purpose, affected no insignificant parade of words, used weighty arguments, and showed them clearly where their interest lay. In critical conjunctures of the state, when the public was alarmed with some

pressing danger, when the people were assembled, and proclamation was made by the crier, for any one to rise and deliver his opinion upon the present situation of affairs, empty declamation and sophistical reasoning would not only have been hissed, but resented and punished by an assembly so intelligent and accustomed to business. Their greatest orators trembled on such occasions, when they rose to address the people, as they knew they were to be held answerable for the issue of the counsel which they gave. The most liberal endowments of the greatest princes never could found such a school for true oratory, as was formed by the nature of the Athenian republic. Eloquence there sprung, native and vigorous, from amidst the contentious of faction and freedom, of public business and of active life ; and not from that retirement and speculation, which we are apt sometimes to fancy more favourable to eloquence than they are found to be.

Pylistratus, who was cotemporary with Solon, and subverted his plan of government, is mentioned by Plutarch as the first who distinguished himself among the Athenians by application to the arts of speech. His ability in these arts, he employed for raising himself to the sovereign power ; which, however, when he had attained it, he exercised with moderation. Of the orators who flourished between his time and the Peloponnesian war, no particular mention is made in history. Pericles, who died about the beginning of that war, was properly the first who carried eloquence to a great height ; to such a height, indeed, that it does not appear he was ever afterwards surpassed. He was more than an orator ; he was also a statesman and a general ; expert in business, and of consummate address. For forty years, he governed Athens with absolute sway ; and historians ascribe his in-

fluence, not more to his political talents than to his eloquence, which was of that forcible and vehement kind, that bore every thing before it, and triumphed over the passions and affections of the people. Hence he had the surname of Olympias given him : and it was said, that, like Jupiter, he thundered when he spoke. Though his ambition be liable to censure, yet he was distinguished for several virtues ; and it was the confidence which the people reposed in his integrity, that gave such a powerful effect to his eloquence. He appears to have been generous, magnanimous, and public-spirited : he raised no fortune to himself ; he expended, indeed, great sums of the public money, but chiefly on public works ; and at his death, is said to have valued himself principally on having never obliged any citizen to wear mourning on his account, during his long administration. It is a remarkable particular recorded of Pericles by Suidas, that he was the first Athenian who composed, and put into writing, a discourse designed for the public.

Posterior to Pericles, in the course of the Peloponnesian war, arose Cleon, Alcibiades, Critias, and Theramenes, eminent citizens of Athens, who were not distinguished for their eloquence. They were not orators by profession ; they were not formed by schools, but by a much more powerful education, that of business and debate ; where man sharpened man, and civil affairs, carried on by public speaking, brought every power of the mind into action. The manner or style of oratory which then prevailed, we learn from the orations in the history of Thucydides, who also flourished in the same age. It was manly, vehement, and concise, even to some degree of obscurity. “ *Grandes erant verbis,*” says Cicero, “ *crebri sententiis, compressione rerum breves, et, ob eam ipsam causam, interdum sub-*

“*obscuri**.” A manner very different from what in modern times we would conceive to be the style of popular oratory ; and which tends to give a high idea of the acuteness of those audiences to which they spoke.

The power of eloquence having, after the days of Pericles, become an object of greater consequence than ever, this gave birth to a set of men till then unknown, called rhetoricians, and sometimes sophists, who arose in multitudes during the Peloponnesian war : such as Protagoras, Prodicus, Thrasymus, and one who was more eminent than all the rest, Gorgias of Leontium. These sophists joined to their art of rhetoric a subtle logic, and were generally a sort of metaphysical sceptics. Gorgias, however, was a professed master of eloquence only. His reputation was prodigious. He was highly venerated in Leontium of Sicily, his native city ; and money was coined with his name upon it. In the latter part of his life, he established himself at Athens, and lived till he had attained the age of one hundred and five years. Hermogenes (*de Ideis*, l. ii. cap. 9.) has preserved a fragment of his, from which we see his style and manner. It is extremely quaint and artificial ; full of antithesis and pointed expression ; and shows how far the Grecian subtilty had already carried the study of language. These rhetoricians did not content themselves with delivering general instructions concerning eloquence to their pupils, and endeavouring to form their taste ; but they professed the art of giving them receipts for making all sorts of orations ; and of teaching them how to speak for, and against, every cause whatever. Upon this plan, they were the first who treated of common places, and the artificial

• “ They were magnificent in their expressions ; they abounded in thought ; they compressed their matter into few words, and, by their brevity, were sometimes obscure.”

Invention of arguments and topics for every subject. In the hands of such men, we may easily believe that oratory would degenerate from the masculine strain it had hitherto held; and become a trifling and sophistical art; and we may justly deem them the first corrupters of true eloquence. To them, the great Socrates opposed himself. By a profound, but simple reasoning peculiar to himself, he exploded their sophistry; and endeavoured to recal men's attention from that abuse of reasoning and discourse which began to be in vogue, to natural language, and sound and useful thought.

In the same age, though somewhat later than the philosopher above mentioned, flourished Isocrates, whose writings are still extant. He was a professed rhetorician, and by teaching eloquence, he acquired both a great fortune, and higher fame than any of his rivals in that profession. No contemptible orator he was. His orations are full of morality and good sentiments: they are flowing and smooth; but too destitute of vigour. He never engaged in public affairs, nor pleaded causes; and accordingly his orations are calculated only for the shade: "Pompæ," Cicero allows, "magis quam pugnæ aptior; ad voluptatem aurium accommodatus potius quam ad judiciorum certamen*." The style of Gorgias of Leontium was formed into short sentences, composed generally of two members balanced against each other. The style of Isocrates, on the contrary, is swelling and full; and he is said to be the first who introduced the method of composing in regular periods, which had a studied music and harmonious cadence; a manner which he has carried to a vicious excess. What shall we think of an ora-

* "More fitted for show than for debate; better calculated for the amusement of an audience, than for judicial contests."

tor, who employed ten years in composing one discourse, still extant, entitled the *Panegyric*? How much frivolous care must have been bestowed on all the minute elegance of words and sentences? Dionysius of Halicarnassus has given us, upon the orations of Isocrates, as also upon those of some other Greek orators, a full and regular treatise, which is, in my opinion, one of the most judicious pieces of ancient criticism extant, and very worthy of being consulted. He commends the splendor of Isocrates's style, and the morality of his sentiments; but severely censures his affectation, and the uniform regular cadence of all his sentences. He holds him to be a florid declaimer; not a natural persuasive speaker. Cicero, in his critical works, though he admits his failings, yet discovers a propensity to be very favourable to that "plena ac numerosa oratio," that swelling and musical style which Isocrates introduced; and with the love of which, Cicero himself was, perhaps, somewhat infected. In one of his treatises (*Orat. ad M. Brut.*) he informs us, that his friend Brutus and he differed in this particular, and that Brutus found fault with his partiality to Isocrates. The manner of Isocrates generally catches young people, when they begin to attend to composition; and it is very natural that it should do so. It gives them an idea of that regularity, cadence, and magnificence of style, which fills the ear: but when they come to write or speak for the world, they will find this ostentatious manner unfit, either for carrying on business, or commanding attention. It is said, that the high reputation of Isocrates prompted Aristotle, who was nearly his contemporary, or lived but a little after him, to write his institutions of rhetoric; which are indeed formed upon a plan of eloquence very different from that of Isocrates and the rhetoricians of that time. He seems to have had

it in view to direct the attention of orators much more towards convincing and affecting their hearers, than towards the musical cadence of periods.

Isæus and Lysias, some of whose orations are preserved, belong also to this period. Lysias was somewhat earlier than Isocrates, and is the model of that manner which the ancients call the "Tennis vel subtilis." He has none of Isocrates's pomp. He is every where pure and Attic in the highest degree; simple and unaffected; but wants force, and is sometimes frigid in his compositions*.

* In the judicious comparison, which Dionysius of Halicarnassus makes of the merits of Lysias and Isocrates, he ascribes to Lysias, as the distinguishing character of his manner, a certain grace or elegance arising from simplicity; "σφοδρὸς γὰρ ὁ Λυσίου λεξις ἔχει τὸ Χάριον ἢ δ' Ἰσοκράτης, βέλτεται." "The style of Lysias has gracefulness for its nature; that of Isocrates seeks to have it." In the art of narration, as distinct, probable, and persuasive, he holds Lysias to be superior to all orators: at the same time, he admits that his composition is more adapted to private litigation than to great subjects. He convinces, but he does not elevate nor animate. The magnificence and splendor of Isocrates is more suited to great occasions. He is more agreeable than Lysias; and, in dignity of sentiment, far excels him. With regard to the affectation which is visible in Isocrates's manner, he concludes what he says of it with the following excellent observations, which should never be forgotten by any who aspire to be true orators:

"Τὰς μὲντοι ἀγωγὰς τῶν περιόδων τὸ κυκλίον, καὶ τῶν σχηματισμῶν τῆς λέξεως τὸ μετρητικόν, ἢ ἰσοκλιμαζόν, δαλύνει γὰρ ἡ διακρίσις πολλὰκις τὸ φθῆγμα τῆς λέξεως, καὶ τὴ κομψὴ λείπεται ὅσα ἀληθινὰ. κρᾶτισον τ' ἐπὶ τῷ ταύτῳ ἡ διαλεκτικὴ πολιτικῇ, καὶ ἡ γράμμιον, τὸ ὁμοιοτάτου τῷ κατὰ φύσιν. βέλτεται δὲ ἡ φύσις τοῖς τοιςμασιν ἐπισθῆαι τῇ λέξει, ὡς τῇ λέξει ἡ τοιςμασιν συμβῆαι δὲ διὰ περὶ μολίμῃ καὶ ἱερπῆς λογιῇ καὶ ἰδωτῇ τοῦ περὶ ψυχῆς τριχότου κινδύνου ἢ δικασαῖς, τὰ κομψα, καὶ θιατρικα, καὶ μίαν κινδυνεύου ἢ οὐδ' αὖτις δοκῇ ὡς παρὰ δὲ ὡς αὖτις ὡς μάλιστ' ὅτι βέλτεται καὶ βλαβερὸς ὡς αἰτία γινώσκου. χαριτισμὸς γὰρ παρὰ τὴν φύσιν, καὶ καλῶς γινώσκου, ἀπὸ τοῦ πράγματος καὶ τοῦ λόγου τοῦ ὅλου." Judic. de Isocrate, p. 553. "His studied circumflexion of periods, and juvenile affectation of the flowers of speech, I do not approve. The thought is frequently made subservient to the music of the sentence; and elegance is preferred to reason. Whereas, in every discourse, where business and affairs are concerned, nature ought to be followed: and nature certainly dictates,

Ææus is chiefly remarkable for being the master of the great Demosthenes, in whom, it must be acknowledged, eloquence shone forth with higher splendor, than perhaps in any that ever bore the name of an orator, and whose manner and character, therefore, must deserve our particular attention.

I shall not spend any time upon the circumstances of Demosthenes's life ; they are well known. The strong ambition which he discovered to excel in the art of speaking—the unsuccessfulness of his first attempts—his unwearied perseverance in surmounting all the disadvantages that arose from his person and address—his shutting himself up in a cave, that he might study with less distraction—his declaiming by the sea-shore, that he might accustom himself to the noise of a tumultuous assembly, and with pebbles in his mouth, that he might correct a defect in his speech—his practising at home with a naked sword hanging over his shoulder, that he might check an ungraceful motion, to which he was subject—all those circumstances which we learn from Plutarch, are very encouraging to such as study eloquence ; as they show how far art and application may avail, for acquiring an excellence which nature seemed unwilling to grant us.

Despising the affected and florid manner which the rhetoricians of that age followed, Demosthenes returned to the forcible and manly eloquence of

that the expression should be an object subordinate to the sense, not the sense to the expression. When one rises to give public council concerning war and peace, or takes the charge of a private man who is standing at the bar to be tried for his life, those studied decorations, those theatrical graces and juvenile flowers, are out of place. Instead of being of service, they are detrimental to the cause we espouse. When the contest is of a serious kind, ornaments, which at another time would have beauty, then lose their effect, and prove hostile to the affections which we wish to raise in our hearers."

Pericles ; and strength and vehemence form the principal characteristics of his style. Never had orator a finer field than Demosthenes in his Olynthiacs and Philippics, which are his capital orations ; and, no doubt, to the nobleness of the subject, and to that integrity and public spirit which eminently breathe in them, they are indebted for much of their merit. The subject is, to rouse the indignation of his countrymen against Philip of Macedon, the public enemy of the liberties of Greece ; and to guard them against the insidious measures, by which that crafty prince endeavoured to lay them asleep to danger. In the prosecution of this end, we see him taking every proper method to animate a people, renowned for justice, humanity, and valour, but in many instances become corrupt and degenerate. He boldly taxes them with their venality, their indolence, and indifference to the public cause ; while at the same time, with all the art of an orator, he recalls the glory of their ancestors to their thoughts, shows them that they are still a flourishing and a powerful people, the natural protectors of the liberty of Greece, and who wanted only the inclination to exert themselves, in order to make Philip tremble. With his cotemporary orators, who were in Philip's interest, and who persuaded the people to peace, he keeps no measures, but plainly reproaches them as the betrayers of their country. He not only prompts to vigorous conduct, but he lays down the plan of that conduct ; he enters into particulars ; and points out, with great exactness, the measures of execution. This is the strain of these orations. They are strongly animated ; and full of the impetuosity and fire of public spirit. They proceed in a continued train of inductions, consequences, and demonstrations, founded on sound reason. The figures which he uses, are never sought after ; but always rise from

the subject. He employs them sparingly indeed; for splendor and ornament are not the distinctions of this orator's composition. It is an energy of thought peculiar to himself, which forms his character, and sets him above all others. He appears to attend much more to things than to words. We forget the orator, and think of the business. He warms the mind, and impels to action. He has no parade and ostentation—no methods of insinuation—no laboured introductions; but is like a man full of his subject, who, after preparing his audience by a sentence or two for hearing plain truths, enters directly on business.

Demosthenes appears to great advantage, when contrasted with Æschines in the celebrated oration "pro Corona." Æschines was his rival in business, and personal enemy; and one of the most distinguished orators of that age. But when we read the two orations, Æschines is feeble in comparison of Demosthenes, and makes much less impression on the mind. His reasonings concerning the law that was in question, are indeed very subtle; but his invective against Demosthenes is general, and ill supported. Whereas Demosthenes is a torrent, that nothing can resist. He bears down his antagonist with violence; he draws his character in the strongest colours; and the particular merit of that oration is, that all the descriptions in it are highly picturesque. There runs through it a strain of magnanimity and high honour: the orator speaks with that strength and conscious dignity which great actions and public spirit alone inspire. Both orators use great liberties with one another; and, in general, that unrestrained licence which ancient manners permitted, and which was carried by public speakers even to the length of abusive names and downright scurrility, as appears both here and in Cicero's Philippics, hurts and offends a modern

ear. What those ancient orators gained by such a manner, in point of freedom and boldness, is more than compensated by want of dignity ; which seems to give an advantage, in this respect, to the greater decency of modern speaking..

The style of Demosthenes is strong and concise, though sometimes, it must not be dissembled, harsh and abrupt. His words are very expressive ; his arrangement is firm and manly ; and, though far from being unmusical, yet it seems difficult to find in him that studied, but concealed number and rhythmus, which some of the ancient critics are fond of attributing to him. Negligent of those lesser graces, one would rather conceive him to have aimed at that sublime which lies in sentiment. His action and pronounciation are recorded to have been uncommonly vehement and ardent ; which, from the manner of his composition, we are naturally led to believe. The character which one forms of him, from reading his works, is of the austere, rather than the gentle kind. He is, on every occasion, grave, serious, passionate ; takes every thing on a high tone ; never lets himself down, nor attempts any thing like pleasantry. If any fault can be found with his admirable eloquence, it is, that he sometimes borders on the hard and dry. He may be thought to want smoothness and grace ; which Dionysius of Halicarnassus attributes to his imitating too closely the manner of Thucydides, who was his great model for style, and whose history he is said to have written eight times over with his own hand. But these defects are far more than compensated, by that admirable and masterly force of masculine eloquence, which, as it overpowered all who heard it, cannot, at this day, be read without emotion.

After the days of Demosthenes, Greece lost her liberty, eloquence of course languished, and relapsed.

again into the feeble manner introduced by the rhetoricians and sophists. Demetrius Phalerius, who lived in the next age to Demosthenes, attained indeed some character ; but he is represented to us as a flowery, rather than a persuasive speaker, who aimed at grace rather than substance. " Delectabat Athenienses," says Cicero, " magis quam inflammabat." " He amused the Athenians, rather than warmed them." And after his time, we hear of no more Grecian orators of any note.

LECTURE XXVI.

HISTORY OF ELOQUENCE CONTINUED. —ROMAN ELOQUENCE—CICERO— MODERN ELOQUENCE.

HAVING treated of the rise of eloquence, and of its state among the Greeks, we now proceed to consider its progress among the Romans, where we shall find one model, at least, of eloquence, in its most splendid and illustrious form. The Romans were long a martial nation, altogether rude, and unskilled in arts of any kind. Arts were of late introduction among them; they were not known till after the conquest of Greece; and the Romans always acknowledged the Grecians as their masters in every part of learning.

*Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artes
Intulit agresti Latio*.*——

HOR. Epist. ad Aug.

As the Romans derived their eloquence, poetry,

* When conquer'd Greece brought in her captive arts,
She triumph'd o'er her savage conquerors' hearts;
Taught our rough verse its numbers to refine,
And our rude style with elegance to shine.

Francis.

and learning from the Greeks, so they must be confessed to be far inferior to them in genius for all these accomplishments. They were a more grave and magnificent, but a less acute and sprightly people. They had neither the vivacity nor the sensibility of the Greeks; their passions were not so easily moved, nor their conceptions so lively; in comparison of them, they were a phlegmatic nation. Their language resembled their character; it was regular, firm, and stately: but wanted that simple and expressive naivete, and, in particular, that flexibility to suit every different mode and species of composition, for which the Greek tongue is distinguished above that of every other country.

Græcis ingenium, Græcis dedit ore rotundum
Musa loqui*.

Ars Poet.

And hence, when we compare together the various rival productions of Greece and Rome, we shall always find this distinction obtain, that in the Greek productions there is more native genius; in the Roman, more regularity and art. What the Greeks invented, the Romans polished; the one was the original, rough sometimes, and incorrect; the other, a finished copy.

As the Roman government, during the republic, was of the popular kind, there is no doubt, but that, in the hands of the leading men, public speaking became early an engine of government, and was employed for gaining distinction and power. But in the rude unpolished times of the state, their speaking was hardly of that sort that could be called eloquence. Though Cicero, in his treatise “*de Claris Oratoribus*,” endeavours to give some re-

* To her lov'd Greeks the muse indulgent gave,
To her lov'd Greeks with greatness to conceive;
And in sublimer tone their language raise:
Her Greeks were only covetous of praise.

Francis,

putation to the elder Cato, and those who were his contemporaries, yet he acknowledges it to have been "Asperum et horridum genus dicendi," a rude and harsh strain of speech. It was not till a short time preceding Cicero's age, that the Roman orators rose into any note. Crassus and Antonius, two of the speakers in the dialogue *De Oratore*, appear to have been the most eminent, whose different manners Cicero describes with great beauty in that dialogue, and in his other rhetorical works. But as none of their productions are extant, nor any of Hortensius's, who was Cicero's contemporary and rival at the bar, it is needless to transcribe from Cicero's writings the account which he gives of those great men, and of the character of their eloquence*.

The object in this period most worthy to draw our attention, is Cicero himself; whose name alone suggests every thing that is splendid in oratory. With the history of his life, and with his character as a man and a politician, we have not at present any direct concern. We consider him only as an eloquent speaker; and, in this view, it is our business to remark both his virtues, and his defects, if he has any. His virtues are, beyond controversy, eminently great. In all his orations there is high art. He begins, generally, with a regular exordium; and with much preparation and insinuation prepossesses the hearers, and studies to gain their affections. His method is clear, and his arguments are arranged with great propriety. His method is indeed more clear than that of Demosthenes; and this is one advantage which he has over him. We find every thing in its

* Such as are desirous of particular information on this head, had better have recourse to the original, by reading Cicero's three books *de Oratore*, and his other two treatises, entitled, the one, *Brutus*, five *de Claris Oratoribus*; the other, *Orator*, ad M. Brutum; which, on several accounts, well deserve perusal.

proper place ; he never attempts to move, till he has endeavoured to convince ; and in moving, especially the softer passions, he is very successful. No man knew the power and force of words better than Cicero. He rolls them along with the greatest beauty and pomp ; and, in the structure of his sentences, is curious and exact to the highest degree. He is always full and flowing, never abrupt. He is a great amplifier of every subject ; magnificent, and in his sentiments highly moral. His manner is on the whole diffuse, yet it is often happily varied, and suited to the subject. In his four orations, for instance, against Catiline, the tone and style of each of them, particularly the first and last, are very different, and accommodated with a great deal of judgment to the occasion, and the situation in which they were spoken. When a great public object roused his mind, and demanded indignation and force, he departs considerably from that loose and declamatory manner to which he leans at other times, and becomes exceedingly cogent and vehement. This is the case in his orations against Anthony, and in those two against Verres and Catiline.

Together with those high qualities which Cicero possesses, he is not exempt from certain defects, of which it is necessary to take notice. For the Ciceronian eloquence is a pattern so dazzling by its beauties, that, if not examined with accuracy and judgment, it is apt to betray the unwary into a faulty imitation ; and I am of opinion, that it has sometimes produced this effect. In most of his orations, especially those composed in the earlier part of his life, there is too much art ; even carried the length of ostentation. There is too visible a parade of eloquence. He seems often to aim at obtaining admiration, rather than at operating conviction, by what he says. Hence, on some occasions he is showy rather than solid ; and diffuse, where he

ought to have been pressing. His sentences are, at all times, round and sonorous; they cannot be accused of monotony, for they possess variety of cadence; but, from too great a study of magnificence, he is sometimes deficient in strength. On all occasions, where there is the least room for it, he is full of himself. His great actions, and the real services which he had performed to this country, apologize for this in part; ancient manners, too, imposed fewer restraints from the side of decorum; but, even after these allowances made, Cicero's ostentation of himself cannot be wholly palliated; and his orations, indeed all his works, leave on our minds the impression of a good man, but withal, of a vain man.

The defects which we have now taken notice of in Cicero's eloquence, were not unobserved by his own cotemporaries. This we learn from Quintilian, and from the author of the dialogue "de Causis corruptæ eloquentiæ." Brutus, we are informed, called him, "fractum et elumbem," broken and enervated. "Suorum temporum homines," says Quintilian, "incessere audebant eum ut tumidiorem et Asianum, et redundantem, et in repetitionibus nimium, et in salibus aliquando frigidum, et in compositione fractum et exultantem, et pene viro molliorem*." These censures were undoubtedly carried too far; and favour of malignity and personal enmity. They saw his defects, but they aggravated them; and the source of these aggravations can be traced to the difference which prevailed in Rome in Cicero's days, between two great parties, with re-

* "His cotemporaries ventured to reproach him as swelling, redundant, and Asiatic: too frequent in repetitions; in his attempts towards wit sometimes cold; and, in the strain of his composition, feeble, desultory, and more effeminate than became a man."

spect to eloquence; the "Attici," and the "Asiani." The former, who called themselves the Attics, were the patrons of what they conceived to be the chaste, simple, and natural style of eloquence; from which they accused Cicero as having departed, and as leaning to the florid Asiatic manner. In several of his rhetorical works, particularly in his "Orator ad Brutum," Cicero in his turn, endeavours to expose this sect, as substituting a frigid and jejune manner, in place of the true Attic eloquence; and contends that his own composition was formed upon the real Attic style. In the 10th chapter of the last book of Quintilian's institutions, a full account is given of the disputes between these two parties, and of the Rhodian or middle manner, between the Attics and the Asiatics. Quintilian himself declares on Cicero's side; and, whether it be called Attic or Asiatic, prefers the full, the copious, and the amplifying style. He concludes with this very just observation: "Plures sunt eloquentiæ facies; sed stultissimum est quærere, ad quam recturus se sit orator; cum omnis species, quæ modo recta est, habeat usum. — Utetur enim, ut res exiget, omnibus; nec pro causa modo, sed pro partibus causæ*."

On the subject of comparing Cicero and Demosthenes, much has been said by critical writers. The different manners of these two princes of eloquence, and the distinguishing characters of each, are so strongly marked in their writings, that the comparison is, in many respects, obvious

* "Eloquence admits of many different forms: and nothing can be more foolish than to enquire, by which of them an orator is to regulate his composition; since every form, which is in itself just, has its own place and use. The orator, according as circumstances require, will employ them all, suiting them not only to the cause or subject of which he treats, but to the different parts of that subject."

and easy. The character of Demosthenes is vigour and austerity; that of Cicero is gentleness and insinuation. In the one, you find more manliness, in the other, more ornament. The one is more harsh, but more spirited and cogent; the other more agreeable, but withal, looser and weaker.

To account for this difference, without any prejudice to Cicero, it has been said, that we must look to the nature of their different auditories; that the refined Athenians followed with ease the concise and convincing eloquence of Demosthenes; but that a manner more popular, more flowery, and declamatory, was requisite in speaking to the Romans, a people less acute, and less acquainted with the arts of speech. But this is not satisfactory. For we must observe that the Greek orator spoke much oftener before a mixed multitude than the Roman. Almost all the public business of Athens was transacted in popular assemblies. The common people were his hearers, and his judges. Whereas Cicero generally addressed himself to the "Patres Conscripti," or in criminal trials to the prætor, and the select judges; and it cannot be imagined, that the persons of highest rank and best education in Rome, required a more diffuse manner of pleading than the common citizens of Athens, in order to make them understand the cause, or relish the speaker. Perhaps we shall come nearer the truth, by observing, that to unite all the qualities, without the least exception; that form a perfect orator, and to excel equally in each of those qualities, is not to be expected from the limited powers of human genius. The highest degree of strength is, I suspect, never found united with the highest degree of smoothness and ornament; equal attentions to both are incompatible; and the genius that carries ornament to its utmost length, is not of such a

kind, as can excel as much in vigour. For there plainly lies the characteristical difference between these two celebrated orators.

It is a disadvantage to Demosthenes, that, besides his conciseness, which sometimes produces obscurity, the language, in which he writes, is less familiar to most of us than the Latin, and that we are less acquainted with the Greek antiquities than we are with the Roman. We read Cicero with more ease, and of course with more pleasure. Independent of this circumstance, too, he is, no doubt, in himself, a more agreeable writer than the other. But notwithstanding this advantage, I am of opinion, that were the state in danger, or some great national interest at stake, which drew the serious attention of the public, an oration in the spirit and strain of Demosthenes, would have more weight, and produce greater effects than one in the Ciceronian manner. Were Demosthenes's *Philippics* spoken in a British assembly, in a similar conjuncture of affairs, they would convince and persuade at this day. The rapid style, the vehement reasoning, the disdain, anger, boldness, freedom, which perpetually animate them, would render their success infallible over any modern assembly. I question whether the same can be said of Cicero's orations; whose eloquence, however beautiful, and however well suited to the Roman taste, yet borders oftener on declamation, and is more remote from the manner in which we now expect to hear real business and causes of importance treated*.

In comparing Demosthenes and Cicero, most of the French critics are disposed to give the preference to the latter. P. Rapin the Jesuit,

* In this judgment, I concur with Mr. David Hume, in his essay upon eloquence. He gives it as his opinion, that, of all human productions, the orations of Demosthenes present to us the models which approach the nearest to perfection.

In the parallels which he has drawn between some of the most eminent Greek and Roman writers, uniformly decides in favour of the Roman. For the preference which he gives to Cicero, he assigns, and lays stress on one reason of a pretty extraordinary nature; viz. that Demosthenes could not possibly have so complete an insight as Cicero into the manners and passions of men; why?—Because he had not the advantage of perusing Aristotle's treatise of rhetoric, wherein, says our critic, he has fully laid open that mystery: and, to support this weighty argument, he enters into a controversy with A. Gellius, in order to prove that Aristotle's rhetoric was not published till after Demosthenes had spoken, at least, his most considerable orations. Nothing can be more childish. Such orators as Cicero and Demosthenes, derived their knowledge of the human passions, and their power of moving them, from higher sources than any treatise of rhetoric. One French critic has indeed departed from the common track; and, after bestowing on Cicero those just praises to which the consent of so many ages shows him to be entitled, concludes, however, with giving the palm to Demosthenes. This is Fenelon, the famous archbishop of Cambray, and author of *Telemachus*; himself surely no enemy to all the graces and flowers of composition. It is in his *Reflexions on rhetoric and poetry*, that he gives this judgment; a small tract, commonly published along with his dialogues on eloquence*. These dialogues and reflexions are

* As his expressions are remarkably happy and beautiful, the passage here referred to deserves to be inserted.—“ Je ne crains pas dire, que Demosthenes paroît supérieur à Cicéron. Je proteste que personne n'admire plus Cicéron que je fais. Il embellit tout ce qu'il touche. Il fait honneur à la parole. Il fait des mots ce qu'un autre n'en sauroit faire. Il a je ne sai

particularly worthy of perusal, as containing, I think, the justest ideas on the subject, that are to be met with in any modern critical writer.

The reign of eloquence, among the Romans, was very short. After the age of Cicero, it languished, or rather expired; and we have no reason to wonder at this being the case. For not only was liberty entirely extinguished, but arbitrary power felt in its heaviest and most oppressive weight;—Providence having, in its wrath, delivered over the Roman empire to a succession of some of the most execrable tyrants that ever disgraced and scourged the human race. Under their government, it was naturally to be expected that taste would be corrupted, and genius discouraged. Some of the ornamental arts, less intimately connected with liberty, continued, for a while, to prevail; but for that masculine eloquence, which had exercised itself in the senate, and in the public affairs, there was no longer any place. The change which was produced on eloquence, by the nature of the government, and the state of the public manners, is beautifully described in the *Dialogue de Causis corruptæ eloquentiæ*, which is

combien de sortes d'esprits. Il est même court, et véhément, toutes les fois qu'il veut l'être; contre Catiline, contre Verres, contre Antoine. Mais on remarque quelque parure dans son discours. L'art y est merveilleux; mais on l'entrevoit. L'orateur en pensant au salut de la république, ne s'oublie pas, et ne se laisse pas oublier. Demosthène paroît sortir de soi, et ne voir que la patrie. Il ne cherche point le beau; il le fait, sans y penser. Il est au-dessus de l'admiration. Il se sert de la parole, comme une homme modeste de son habit, pour se couvrir. Il tonne; il foudroie. C'est un torrent qui entraîne tout. On ne peut le critiquer, parcequ'on est saisi. On pense aux choses qu'il dit, et non à ses paroles. On le perd de vue. On n'est occupé que de Philippe qui envahit tout. Je suis charmé de ces deux orateurs: mais j'avoue que je suis moins touché de l'art infini, et de la magnifique éloquence de Cicéron, que de la rapide simplicité de Demosthène."

attributed, by some, to Tacitus, by others, to Quintilian. Luxury, effeminacy, and flattery, overwhelmed all. The Forum, where so many great affairs had been transacted, was now become a desert. Private causes were still pleaded; but the public was no longer interested; nor any general attention drawn to what passed there: "Unus inter hæc, et alter, dicenti, assistit; et res velut in solitudine agitur. Oratori autem clamore plausuque opus est, et velut quodam theatro, qualia quotidie antiquis oratoribus contingebant; cum tot ac tam nobiles forum coarctarent; cum clientelæ, et tribus, et municipiorum legationes, periclitantibus assisterent; cum in plerisque judiciis crederet populus Romanus, sua interesse quid judicaretur*."

In the schools of the declaimers, the corruption of eloquence was completed. Imaginary and fantastic subjects, such as had no reference to real life, or business, were made the themes of declamation; and all manner of false and affected ornaments were brought into vogue: "Pace vestra liceat dixisse," says Petronius Arbiter, to the declaimers of his time, "primi omnem eloquentiam perdidistis. Levibus enim ac inanibus sonis ludibria quædam excitando, effecistis ut corpus orationis enervaretur atque caderet. Et ideo ego existimo adolescentulos in scholis stultissimos fieri, quia nihil ex iis, quæ in usu habemus, aut audiunt, aut vident; sed piratas cum catenis in littore stantes; et ty-

* "The courts of judicature are, at present, so unfrequented, that the orator seems to stand alone, and talk to bare walls. But eloquence rejoices in the bursts of loud applause, and exults in a full audience; such as used to press round the ancient orators, when the Forum stood crowded with nobles; when a numerous retinue of clients, when foreign ambassadors, when tribes, and whole cities assisted at the debate: and when, in many trials, the Roman people understood themselves to be concerned in the event."

“ rannos edicta scribentes quibus imperent filiis ut
 “ patrum suorum capita præcidant ; sed responsa,
 “ in pestilentia data, ut virgines tres aut plures im-
 “ molentur ; sed mellitos verborum globulos, et
 “ omnia quasi papavere, et sesamo sparsa. Qui
 “ inter hæc nutriuntur, non magis sapere possunt,
 “ quam bene olere qui in culina habitant*.” In
 the hands of the Greek rhetoricians, the manly and
 sensible eloquence of their first noted speakers, uege-
 nerated, as I formerly showed, into subtilty and
 sophistry ; in the hands of the Roman declaimers, it
 passed into the quaint and affected ; into point and
 antithesis. This corrupt manner begins to appear
 in the writings of Seneca ; and shows itself, also, in
 the famous panegyric of Pliny the younger on Tra-
 jan, which may be considered as the last effort of
 Roman oratory. Though the author was a man of
 genius, yet it is deficient in nature and ease. We see,
 throughout the whole, a perpetual attempt to de-
 part from the ordinary way of thinking, and to sup-
 port a forced elevation.

In the decline of the Roman empire, the intro-
 duction of christianity gave rise to a new species of
 eloquence, in the apologies, sermons, and pastoral

* “ With your permission, I must be allowed to say, that
 you have been the first destroyers of all true eloquence. For
 by those mock subjects, on which you employ your empty
 and unmeaning compositions, you have enervated and over-
 thrown all that is manly and substantial in oratory. I cannot
 but conclude, that the youth whom you educate, must be to-
 tally perverted in your schools, by hearing and seeing nothing
 which has any affinity to real life, or human affairs ; but sto-
 ries of pirates standing on the shore, provided with chains for
 loading their captives, and of tyrants issuing their edicts, by
 which children are commanded to cut off the heads of their
 parents ; but responses given by oracles in the time of pesti-
 lence, that several virgins must be sacrificed ; but glittering
 ornaments of phrase, and a style highly spiced, if we may say
 so, with affected conceits. They who are educated in the
 midst of such studies, can no more acquire a good taste, than
 they can smell sweet, who dwell perpetually in a kitchen.”

writings of the fathers of the church. Among the Latin fathers, Lactantius and Minutius Felix are the most remarkable for purity of style ; and, in a later age, the famous St. Augustine possesses a considerable share of sprightliness and strength. But none of the fathers afford any just models of eloquence. Their language, as soon as we descend to the third or fourth century, becomes harsh ; and they are, in general, infected with the taste of that age, a love of swoln and strained thoughts, and of the play of words. Among the Greek fathers, the most distinguished, by far, for his oratorical merit, is St. Chrysostome. His language is pure ; his style highly figured. He is copious, smooth, and sometimes pathetic. But he retains, at the same time, much of that character which has been always attributed to the Asiatic eloquence, diffuse and redundant to a great degree, and often overwrought and tumid. He may be read, however, with advantage, for the eloquence of the pulpit, as being freer from false ornaments than the Latin fathers.

As there is nothing more that occurs to me, deserving particular attention in the middle age, I pass now to the state of eloquence in modern times. Here, it must be confessed, that, in no European nation, public speaking has been considered as so great an object, or been cultivated with so much care, as in Greece or Rome. Its reputation has never been so high ; its effects have never been so considerable : nor has that high and sublime kind of it, which prevailed in those ancient states, been so much as aimed at : notwithstanding, too, that a new profession has been established, which gives peculiar advantages to oratory, and affords it the noblest field ; I mean, that of the church. The genius of the world seems, in this respect, to have undergone some alteration. The two countries where we might expect to find most of the spirit of

eloquence, are France and Great Britain : France, on account of the distinguished turn of the nation towards all the liberal arts, and of the encouragement which, for this century past, those arts have received from the public ; Great Britain, on account both of the public capacity and genius, and of the free government which it enjoys. Yet, so it is, that, in neither of those countries, has the talent of public speaking risen near to the degree of its ancient splendor. While in other productions of genius, both in prose and in poetry, they have contended for the prize with Greece and Rome ; nay, in some compositions, may be thought to have surpassed them : the names of Demosthenes and Cicero, stand, at this day, unrivalled in fame ; and it would be held presumptuous and absurd, to pretend to place any modern whatever in the fame, or even in a nearly equal rank.

It seems particularly surprising, that Great Britain should not have made a more conspicuous figure in eloquence than it has hitherto attained ; when we consider the enlightened, and, at the same time, the free and bold genius of the country, which seems not a little to favour oratory ; and when we consider, that, of all the polite nations, it alone possesses a popular government, or admits into the legislature, such numerous assemblies as can be supposed to lie under the dominion of eloquence*. Notwithstanding this advantage, it must be confessed, that, in most parts of eloquence, we are undoubtedly inferior, not only to the Greeks

* Mr. Hume, in his essay on eloquence, makes this observation, and illustrates it with his usual elegance. He, indeed, supposes, that no satisfactory reasons can be given to account for the inferiority of modern to ancient eloquence. In this, I differ from him, and shall endeavour, before the conclusion of this lecture, to point out some causes, to which, I think, it may, in a great measure, be ascribed, in the three great scenes of public speaking.

and Romans, by many degrees, but also in some respects to the French. We have philosophers, eminent and conspicuous, perhaps, beyond any nation, in every branch of science. We have both taste and erudition in a high degree. We have historians, we have poets of the greatest name; but of orators or public speakers, how little have we to boast? And where are the monuments of their genius to be found? In every period we have had some who made a figure, by managing the debates in parliament; but that figure was commonly owing to their wisdom, or their experience in business, more than to their talents for oratory; and unless, in some few instances, wherein the power of oratory has appeared, indeed, with much lustre, the art of parliamentary speaking rather obtained to several a temporary applause, than conferred upon any a lasting renown. At the bar, though, questionless, we have many able pleaders, yet few or none of their pleadings have been thought worthy to be transmitted to posterity; or have commanded attention, any longer than the cause, which was the subject of them, interested the public; while, in France, the pleadings of Patru, in the former age, and those of Cochin and d'Aguesseau, in later times, are read with pleasure, and are often quoted as examples of eloquence by the French critics. In the same manner, in the pulpit, the British divines have distinguished themselves by the most accurate and rational compositions which, perhaps, any nation can boast of. Many printed sermons we have, full of good sense, and of sound divinity and morality; but the eloquence to be found in them, the power of persuasion, of interesting and engaging the heart, which is, or ought to be, the great object of the pulpit, is far from bearing a suitable proportion to the excellence of the matter. There are few arts, in my

opinion, farther from perfection, than that of preaching is among us ; the reasons of which, I shall afterwards have occasion to discuss ; in proof of the fact, it is sufficient to observe, that an English sermon, instead of being a persuasive animated oration, seldom rises beyond the strain of correct and dry reasoning. Whereas, in the sermons of Bossuet, Massillon, Bourdaloue, and Flechier, among the French, we see a much higher species of eloquence aimed at and in a great measure attained, than the British preachers have in view.

In general, the characteristical difference between the state of eloquence in France and in Great Britain, is, that the French have adopted higher ideas both of pleasing and persuading by means of oratory, though sometimes, in the execution they fail. In Great Britain, we have taken up eloquence on a lower key ; but in our execution, as was naturally to be expected, have been more correct. In France, the style of their orators is ornamented with bolder figures ; and their discourse carried on with more amplification, more warmth and elevation. The composition is often very beautiful ; but sometimes, also, too diffuse, and deficient in that strength and cogency which renders eloquence powerful : a defect owing, perhaps, in part, to the genius of the people, which leads them to attend fully as much to ornament as to substance ; and, in part, to the nature of their government, which, by excluding public speaking from having much influence on the conduct of public affairs, deprives eloquence of its best opportunity for acquiring nerves and strength. Hence the pulpit is the principal field which is left for their eloquence. The members, too, of the French academy, give harangues at their admission, in which genius often appears ; but labouring under the mis-

fortune of having no subject to discourse upon, they run commonly into flattery and panegyric, the most barren and insipid of all topics.

I observed before, that the Greeks and Romans aspired to a more sublime species of eloquence, than is aimed at by the moderns. Theirs was of the vehement and passionate kind, by which they endeavoured to inflame the minds of their hearers, and hurry their imaginations away: and, suitable to this vehemence of thought, was their vehemence of gesture and action; the "*supplicatio pedis**, " the "*perculsio frontis et femoris**, " were, as we learn from Cicero's writings, usual gestures among them at the bar; though now they would be reckoned extravagant any where, except upon the stage. Modern eloquence is much more cool and temperate; and, in Great Britain especially, has confined itself almost wholly to the argumentative and rational. It is much of that species which the ancient critics called the "*Tenuis*," or "*Subtilis*;" which aims at convincing and instructing, rather than affecting the passions, and assumes a tone not much higher than common argument and discourse.

Several reasons may be given, why modern eloquence has been so limited and humble in its efforts. In the first place, I am of opinion, that this change must, in part, be ascribed to that correct turn of thinking, which has been so much studied in modern times. It can hardly be doubted, that, in many efforts of mere genius, the ancient Greeks and Romans excelled us; but, on the other hand, that, in accuracy and closeness of reasoning on many subjects, we have some advantage over them, ought, I think, to be admitted also. In proportion as the world has advanced, philosophy has made greater progress. A certain strictness of good sense

* Vide De Clar. Orator,

has, in this island particularly, been cultivated, and introduced into every subject. Hence we are more on our guard against the flowers of elocution ; we are on the watch ; we are jealous of being deceived by oratory. Our public speakers are obliged to be more reserved than the ancients, in their attempts to elevate the imagination, and warm the passions ; and, by the influence of prevailing taste, their own genius is sobered and chastened, perhaps, in too great a degree. It is likely, too, I confess, that what we fondly ascribe to our correctness and good sense, is owing, in a great measure, to our phlegm and natural coldness. For the vivacity and sensibility of the Greeks and Romans, more especially of the former, seem to have been much greater than ours, and to have given them a higher relish of all the beauties of oratory.

Besides these national considerations, we must, in the next place, attend to peculiar circumstances in the three great scenes of public speaking, which have proved disadvantageous to the growth of eloquence among us. Though the parliament of Great Britain be the noblest field which Europe, at this day, affords to a public speaker, yet eloquence has never been so powerful an instrument there, as it was in the popular assemblies of Greece and Rome. Under some former reigns, the High hand of arbitrary power bore a violent sway ; and, in latter times, ministerial influence has generally prevailed. The power of speaking, though always considerable, yet has been often found too feeble to counterbalance either of these ; and, of course, has not been studied with so much zeal and fervour, as where its effect on business was irresistible and certain.

At the bar, our disadvantage, in comparison of the ancients, is great. Among them, the judges were generally numerous ; the laws were few and

simple ; the decision of causes was left, in a great measure, to equity and the sense of mankind. Here was an ample field for what they termed judicial eloquence. But among the moderns, the case is quite altered. The system of law is become much more complicated. The knowledge of it is thereby rendered so laborious an attainment, as to be the chief object of a lawyer's education, and, in a manner, the study of his life. The art of speaking is but a secondary accomplishment, to which he can afford to devote much less of his time and labour. The bounds of eloquence, besides, are now much circumscribed at the bar ; and, except in a few cases, reduced to arguing from strict law, statute, or precedent ; by which means knowledge, much more than oratory, is become the principal requisite.

With regard to the pulpit, it has certainly been a great disadvantage, that the practice of reading sermons, instead of repeating them from memory, has prevailed in England. This may indeed have introduced accuracy ; but it has done great prejudice to eloquence ; for a discourse read, is far inferior to an oration spoken. It leads to a different sort of composition, as well as of delivery ; and can never have an equal effect upon any audience. Another circumstance, too, has been unfortunate. The sectaries and fanatics, before the restoration, adopted a warm, zealous, and popular manner of preaching ; and those who adhered to them in after-times, continued to distinguish themselves by somewhat of the same manner. The odium of these sects drove the established church from that warmth which they were judged to have carried too far, into the opposite extreme of a studied coolness, and composure of manner. Hence, from the art of persuasion, which preaching ought always to be, it has passed in England, into mere reasoning and instruc-

tion ; which not only has brought down the eloquence of the pulpit to a lower tone than it might justly assume ; but has produced this farther effect, that, by accustoming the public ear to such cool and dispassionate discourses, it has tended to fashion other kinds of public speaking upon the same model.

Thus I have given some view of the state of eloquence in modern times, and endeavoured to account for it. It has, as we have seen, fallen below that splendor which it maintained in ancient ages ; and from being sublime and vehement, has come down to be temperate and cool. Yet, still in that region which it occupies, it admits great scope ; and, to the defect of zeal and application, more than to the want of capacity and genius, we may ascribe its not having hitherto risen higher. It is a field where there is much honour yet to be reaped ; it is an instrument which may be employed for purposes of the highest importance. The ancient models may still, with much advantage, be set before us for imitation ; though, in that imitation, we must, doubtless, have some regard to what modern taste and modern manners will bear ; of which I shall afterwards have occasion to say more.

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

